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Interactions in Interpretation

The Pilgrimage of Meaning through Biblical Texts and Contexts

Edited by

Jan Roskovec
Vít Hušek

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Preface

The present volume is intended as a small contribution to the large and complex problem of biblical interpretation and, more specifically, to understanding the character of biblical texts.

That interpretation is a dynamic process is self-evident. It can be visualised as a bi-directional movement between the reader (recipient), immersed in his or her world, and the text, which in turn, is a representation of the author and his or her world. Although the process of interpretation is always initiated by the reader, it is not necessarily confined to him or her. The authors themselves are often readers, unconscious or sometimes very conscious recipients of other texts, written or orally transmitted. Before and while producing their own texts, they were searching those already existing, as instruments for understanding new realities, or were trying to make sense of the already established texts, to find and restore their relevance in the face of new realities.

This phenomenon, described by Julia Kristeva as intertextuality, is quite general and may be studied in practically all quarters where human communication is mediated by some sort of texts, but it has a specific variety in the literature of the Bible. The less we know about the particular authors of its writings – in most cases we know virtually nothing – the more it is noticeable that many if not all biblical texts took their final shape gradually, their creation was substantially informed by the process of tradition, passing over of smaller or larger parts – from single motives, thought patterns and themes, over to particular terms, idioms, formulations, and longer texts.

When Bible is approached in its final form, as a canonical text, the first and foremost impression is – stability. Indeed, one meaning of canonicity can be simply unchangeability (cf. e.g. Rev 22:18–19) and the (abstract) point of establishing certain texts as canonical may be imagined as the moment, when a clear line was drawn between the texts and their interpretations, when the interpretations become separate efforts, time and again reaching back to the text, yet no more changing it, intervening into it. Nevertheless, the previous fluidity remains discernible. In this respect, the established texts of the biblical canon may be likened to the ice on a frozen river: former action is caught up in a still format, pieces of wood and other objects are fixed in positions, by which one can infer their previous movement.

The discovery of such character of the biblical texts naturally brought about efforts to elucidate the complex developments involved in their creation. As it happens with innovations, sometimes the methods of literary and form criticism were overvalued and it was mistakenly assumed that the task of

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interpretation could be fulfilled just by presenting the results of diachronic analysis. Excessive occupation with the history of the texts called for reaction. The emphasis on the synchronic approach to texts, coming from the considerations in general linguistics, did not spare biblical interpretation, and later on it was followed by the turn towards the other side of diachrony in the reader oriented approaches.

Yet, it remains true that comprehending the character of a text, including the process of its composition, may be helpful for understanding the text itself, and so, for its interpretation. This applies especially, when the history of creation is so rich as it is the case with many or most of the biblical texts. The current interpreter may benefit from finding and picking up the threads of interpretation that had been at work in the creation of a particular text and remained "frozen" under its surface. For this purpose, it is helpful to examine the character of the biblical texts with special attention to the dynamic aspects.

By way of a series of probes we did so within the framework of a broad research project *History and Interpretation of the Bible*, running in the years 2012–2018 and funded by Czech Science Foundation (under the code GAČR P401/12/G168). The project integrated five teams with a number of particular research objectives, ranging from Aramaic and cuneiform epigraphic, through consecutive interpretations of the biblical books, over to examining modern translations of the Bible in the Czech language area. Along with the specific results of the research teams we wished also to point to a common perspective. From the rather different standpoints of our research, we attempted to examine the dynamic aspects of canonical texts.

In the first volume we focused on the issue of authority, a fundamental feature of the canon.[1] On several levels we have shown that although authority does generally lead to stabilising the texts endowed with it, this stability does not mean stiffness. Even in the textual transmission of the authoritative, canonical texts, one can observe certain fluidity, movements to change, subtle but perceptible enough to reveal that the concern to preserve was accompanied by the concern to understand. We attempted to explain it by a simple consideration: "authority requires relevance, and therefore incites interpretation".

Interpretation as an effort to find and express, preserve or restore relevance of particular texts of authority remains our focus in the present volume. We concentrate here on the phenomenon of *interaction*, which is at work both in the processes of creation or composition of texts and in their various interpretations. By interactions we mean something more specific than just

1 Dušek, Jan, Jan Roskovec (eds.). *The Process of Authority: The Dynamics in Transmission and Reception of Canonical Texts*. Berlin, Boston: de Gruyter, 2016.

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another description of that bi-directional movement, characteristic for any act of reading or interpretation. Sometimes, this movement takes on the form of an internal, or even external dialogue about a particular theme, motif or textual unit. Following these dialogues is like tracing threads running through different writings and their later readings in different times and cultural environments.

The world of biblical texts can be conceived as a world of a certain language: a complex or a pool of various ideas, notions, images, idioms, stories, or pronouncements. Many of these are naturally singular and quite isolated, but many are shared and referred to in a number of interactions. Those threads make up the fabric representing the special profile of the biblical language world. Sometimes they do not end on its boundary lines, but create links to other 'pools' or language worlds.

For closer examination of this phenomenon, we have chosen two quite clearly defined items, a motif and a textual unit: the motif of dream and the text of Isa 6:9–10. These items have something in common – they both are related to mediation between deity and humanity, God and (his) people. In this respect, they explicitly touch the overall character of the biblical writings, as it was understood by those who wrote, preserved and transmitted them. At the same time, they differ remarkably in their character.

The *motif of dream* is quite general. Dreams belong to archaic experience of human life and probably from early on were believed to be able to provide connection to realities beyond the range of daily and earthly life. In this function, the motif of dream not rarely emerges also in the biblical and cognate literature. Dreams feature in the stories of Jacob, Joseph, Gedeon, Daniel – and Jesus (in Matthew's version). Sometimes, dreams are accepted in these writings as legitimate channels to the will of God and means of prophetic inspiration, whereas at other instances they are rather renounced. As a commonly human – and religious – experience, the phenomenon of dreams is marked with ambiguity that provoked discussions both among the "authors" of the biblical books and their interpreters.

On the contrary, the *passage of Isa 6:9–10* is as particular as any text can be. It relates a calling of a prophet, which in itself is a phenomenon quite specific for the biblical literature. But even there it is unparalleled by its contents, indeed, it belongs to the most obscure texts in the Bible. The prophet Isaiah is namely commissioned to preaching with a foreseen counter-effect – "to make the mind of the people dull, stop their ears, and shut their eyes". At the same time, the enigmatic character of the passage had incited quite a wide range of interactions, it was quoted and referred to by practically all communities engaged with the biblical tradition, from very early on.

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Those two items, together with the general topic of intertextual aspects of biblical interpretation, provided thematic foci of the conference organised as a part of our mentioned research project in May 4–5, 2017, at Protestant Theological Faculty of Charles University in Prague. Selected papers were partly modified according to the discussions and are gathered in the three parts of the present volume.

The *first part* is dedicated to the motif of *dream*. The ground is set by the study of *Filip Horáček*, examining one of the preliminary issues, the question of where the dreams come from. It presents the convictions on this issue in the Jewish tradition (represented by the writings of the Old Testament and Philo) in comparison to those of the Greco-Roman thinkers (Plato, Aristotle, Artemidorus, Synesius, Cicero). It appears that in the biblical milieu the question was posed with much stronger resolution as a problem of assessing the dreams (whether they can or cannot carry a message from God), and as such it had direct bearing on understanding and interpretation of them. In the Greco-Roman thought, on the other hand, the concern was rather to explain the phenomenon of dreams, and so the question of their "quality" was not so pressing. Interestingly, in both cultural rooms, the status (psychic and moral) of the recipient was also contemplated in the considerations about genuineness of dreams: they were not necessarily taken for a general phenomenon, functioning *per se* in the same way in all situations.

The general problem of assessing dreams is taken up in a concentrated form in the contribution by *Filip Čapek*. It is a case study that brings into dialogue two particular biblical writings of the same *Gattung* and originating in a quite similar time period – the books of Qohelet and Sirach. Both these writings explicitly address the issue of whether dreams should be given a serious place in a devout life. Both do not reject the possibility entirely, while remaining quite reserved, but they express their reservation with different emphases. For the both writings, dreams represent insecurity, uncertainty, but of different kinds: Qohelet sees the uncertainty of dreams related fundamentally to their character, whereas Sirach demands – or permits – further verification of their divine source. In this case, the interaction is taking on the form of an indirect dispute, opening insight into various strands of theological thinking in Jerusalem of early 2nd century BCE.

Petr Chalupa in his study examines the topic of dreams in the Greek additions to the Book of Esther, coming from roughly the same period. In this case, the interaction takes place on the trajectory marked by the "classical" dream recipients in the biblical tradition, Joseph and Daniel. Along these lines, the Greek additions present Mordecai as a recipient of a prophetic dream, which frames the story of Esther into the specific conception of history as firmly

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controlled by God's providence. There is no hesitation here about general suitability of dreams to mediate a message from God. The dream of Mordecai is presented as undoubtedly originating with God and providing quite precise, allegorical foretelling of the future. As such, it is a literary device of recontextualising the popular story about divine deliverance of the Jewish people into the apocalyptic theology of history.

The last two studies in the first part of the volume cross the boundary of intra-biblical interpretations and deal with the debates about the issue of dreams among the interpreters of the Bible in the early and later patristics. *Piotr Ashwin Siejkowski* turns his attention to the New Testament passage, in which apostle Paul recalls (probably his own) ecstatic experience of being "caught up to the third heaven" (2 Cor 12:1–4). The apostle does not give any clue as to the form of the experience, but its character of an insight into the 'other' (transcendent) world of heavens would situate it at least in the proximity of dreams in the context of apocalypticism. After all, the apocryphal Apocalypse of Paul developed this puzzling passage in this very direction. The study follows the debate over the passage by the second century authors (Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria and Tertullian) and puts it into the larger context of apologetical polemics over the heritage of Paul. As a dispute about something explicitly unknown – Paul himself declared the content of his experience as unutterable – it was mostly driven by concerns external to the text. The interaction in this case occurred rather with general assumptions about possibilities of a mystical experience.

The study of *Dominik Opatrný* moves further down in the stream of time to the person of Gregory the Great (6th century CE), and back to the Old Testament. It examines a special case of two differing approaches to one text by one author. The biblical text in question is a passage from the Book of Job, in which Eliphaz, one of the friends of Job, supports his viewpoint by referring to a night revelation, possibly a dream. One of the problems that Gregory wrestles with in his exposition is again the question of the origin of the dream. By employing allegorical interpretation of the phenomenon of dream (and sleep) itself, he is able to provide two, quite contradictory answers. This interpretive interaction is based on the ambiguity of the symbolic potential of dream and documents nearly unlimited flexibility of the allegorical method, for which extra-textual considerations are crucial. It gives gravity to the question of what would keep such exposition from being completely arbitrary.

The *second part* of the book traces some travels of meaning carried by the specific textual unit. In the first study of this set, *Gabriela Ivana Vlková* analyses the selected text itself, surveying its exegetical problems from the standpoint of a modern interpreter. She shows that the embarrassment of the passage

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Isa 6:9–10 was perceived from very early on. With the exception of Vulgata, all its ancient translations and versions, including the text of Isaiah from Qumran, attempt to alleviate the harsh saying. Some further interactions with this difficult text can be detected already in other parts of the Book of Isaiah, and it is in this – perhaps primary – context that the passage acquires a more bearable meaning.

The contribution of *Jan Roskovec* broadens the contextual scope and situates the peculiar calling of Isaiah into the larger pool of the motif of obstinacy. It then examines the "effectual history" of the passage in the early Christian thought, as reflected in the New Testament. Here, the interactions are remarkably dense. Apart from a few direct references, there is a number of indirect ones, and those are certainly not marginal. It is probably significant that such an obscure passage – together with the more general motif of obstinacy – had found such resonance among the early Christians. It appears that they saw in their situation, determined by the person of Jesus, his ministry and his crucifixion and resurrection, not only final overcoming of the problem of comprehending the reality of God, but – paradoxically – also sharpening of this problem, escalation of the motif of obstinacy. The text from Isaiah 6 helped them to understand and express that paradox.

Petr Mareček concentrates on one of the places in the New Testament, where the text is directly quoted – the very end of the Book of Acts of the Apostles. At this climactic point, the closing speech of the book's protagonist, apostle Paul, presents in fact the emphases of the author. The quotation of Isaiah 6 is so employed in the concluding denouement, in which Luke summarises his view of history, developed throughout the narrative in both parts of his work.

The last study in this part steps out from the ground of intra-biblical interpretation. *Zuzana Vítková* tracks some of the interactions that the passage from Isaiah 6 instigated among the adherents of the religious movements traditionally subsumed under the label "gnostic". For those who considered knowledge (*gnosis*) as the clue to salvation, a text, according to which God sends the prophet to incapacitate the perception of people, had natural attraction. Three different gnostic writings show quite similar approach to it. Unlike all other interpreters, they had no difficulty with the harshness of the passage, because they did not need to reconcile it with the goodness of God. On the contrary, they read the passage as a manifestation of the malevolent character of a lower deity, the creator-god Demiurge. In this reading, disabling people's cognitive capacities was detached from the special task of the prophet and associated with the very act of creation, affecting thereby all people in general.

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The text lost its integrity and became just a motif. In this way, the preconceptions of the interpreters could entirely prevail in the interaction with the text, although their strong influence could have been observed in the previous cases as well.

The *third section* expands the scope of our study of dialogical elements in interpreting biblical text in somehow looser framework. Again, the chapters of this section examine interpretations of a specific text, of a theological motif, and additionally, of a biblical figure. This is the case of the first chapter, the study by *Eleanor Jasmine Foo*. She offers an analysis of the partly implicit interaction between Jewish and Christian interpreters of the Book of Ruth – discovering such conversation not only in the direct polemic expressly preserved in writings, but also in noticeable similarities that could be explained as borrowings. These betray much more vivid contact between the two communities than has long been assumed in the scholarship, when only the explicit sources were considered.

Peter Cimala focuses on the motif of freedom, an important element in the thought of apostle Paul and the key concept in Paul's Letter to Galatians. This motif resonates quite widely in the Hellenistic culture, but its very core probably should be identified in the interaction with the Old Testament motif of God's liberating as well as constitutive action of exodus.

Another expedition to the patristic exegesis is undertaken by *Pablo Irizar*. In the festal sermons of Augustine, he examines the variables and constants of several expositions of one text by one author on different occasions. The text is Philippians 2:6–7 and its notion of two "forms" of Christ. This case study shows that the variations were caused by interactions not only with the particular feasts of the liturgical year, but also with the polemics, in which the author was currently engaged.

All contributions in the present volume have naturally double ambition. Apart from illuminating the general topic from various angles, they also strive to bring out some valid findings on their specific topic, and thereby to add some insight into the meaning of the biblical texts they interact with.

Jan Roskovec and Vít Hušek

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PART 1

To Understand a Dream – Interactions of a Motif

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The Origin of Dreams in the Bible against the Background of the Greek Theories of Dreams

Filip Horáček

1 Introduction

The traditions about dreaming in the Bible, on the one hand, and in Greek and Latin antiquity, on the other, represent two different worlds, but their confrontation may be fruitful for pointing out the specific features of both. To be sure, the difference should not be overemphasized, but it is noticeable enough. A number of aspects could be suggested for comparison. The nature of the dreams in the Bible would appear with greater clarity when compared with the antique phenomena of the same kind – e.g. dream epiphanies of gods or other authoritative figures, incubation (sleeping in given sanctuaries for a mantic dream), nightmares, double-dreams (the same one appearing to two or more people), 'apports' (objects in dreams that are materialised on awakening). One can also confront the arts of dream interpretation, the linking of the moral and social standing of the dreamer with the mantic relevance of his/her visions, the issue of whether the source texts are fictions or descriptions of actual experience, the impact of cultural patterns, etc. This contribution will concentrate on the single question of where dreams come from. Although there is some variety of ideas about the origin of dreams in both cultures, we can still distinguish some general differences in them with respect to where and with what connotations the source(s) of dreams is/are perceived.

2 Origin of Dreams as a Source of Controversions

The Biblical passages Jer 23:25–32 (with 27:9, 29:8f., 31:23–6); Zech 10:2; Qoh 5:2, 6; Sir 34:1–8, 40:1–10, and the very special Deut 13:1–5[1] may be grouped together, because they all share one trait that contrasts strikingly with Greco-Roman notions of dreams. They all present their respective ideas of the source(s) of dreams in a deeply convinced or even resolute manner. Although Aristotle and Cicero were also quite positive about what they thought about the true

1 Perhaps also marginally Isa 29:7f. In Lev 19:26, 31; Jer 14:14 or Mich 3:7 it is not clear whether dreams are implied or not.

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origin or nature of dreams, they did not enter into such an open conflict as what could provisionally be called 'the Biblical momentum'. In the biblical passages, such decided convictions about the correct view are related to the fact that there is always something at stake. In this respect, Greek and Roman thought, with its keeping to the simultaneous heterogeneity of perspectives (cf., already, Hippocrates *De victu 4* 87.1),[2] shows a substantially more detached point of view, even though it is at the cost of the Biblical prophetic or preaching momentum.

Jeremiah's starkly engaged view of dreams, in fact the harshest passage concerning dreams in the OT,[3] is co-determined by the prophet's struggle with the misleading anti-Babylonian prophecy of his time. In his main passage about dreams, Jer 23:25–32, Jeremiah accentuates dangerous ambiguity in the issue of the origin of dreams. A dream may or may not come from God and no infallible evaluation of a dream as to its legitimate origin is possible. This uncertainty is built upon by the false prophets. Dreams as a source for prophecy are taken by Jeremiah as easily misleading (29:8 MT) and he holds that the same is true for the wide range of foretellers of the time (professional or, possibly, also private; Zech 10:2, Jer 27:9 MT). This critique in 29:8 seems to be intensified even grammatically, by the use of the utterly isolated mixed form of *pi'el* and *hif'il* of the root חלם ("to dream"), expressing, in contrast to the usual *qal*, perhaps the wishful thinking contained in the allegedly prophetic dreaming: "Do not listen to the dreams you hope for" or "to the dreams you want to dream" (מַחְלְמִים).[4] The word against the prophets in Jer 23:16, who have nothing more to say than the 'visions of their heart', and the reference to the word of God, which is not only heard but also 'seen' (יִרְאֶה) in v. 18 may also relate to the form of a dream.

Harsh as Jeremiah's polemic against the mainstream prophecies of his day is, it does not amount to a dismissal of dreams as such. It is opposed primarily to the morally illegitimate status of the prophets, which qualifies their source as invalid (Jer 23:11.13–15). At the same time, a later phase of the Book of Jeremiah relates that the prophet dreamt a prophetic dream (31:23–6), and he himself perhaps conceded it even to the prophets criticised by him (cf. 23:28.30), even though they should not mistake their own dreams for prophetic words.[5]

Later on, in the Hellenistic milieu, a different type of criticism was levelled against the veracity of dreams itself. Both Qoheleth and Sirach attack dreams

2 He himself seems to have inherited the distinction between god-sent and other dreams here.

3 Chapter 23 also represents the most belligerent passage in the OT against competing prophets (Fischer, *Jeremia 1–25*, 689, 700; cf. Ehrlich, *Traum*, 156).

4 Gesenius and Donner, s.v. חָלַם, "träumen lassen"; GKC § 53.o doubt the *hif'il* on textual grounds.

5 Fischer, *Jeremia 1–25*, 702; cf. Ehrlich, *Traum*, 160.

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as vain delusions. In Ecclesiastes' warning against dreams in Qoh 5:2.6, they are conceived of as doubtful or illusive. They are not to be trusted because they are a dangerous instigation to rash vows to God in the Temple, according to the whole pericope 4:17–5:6.[6] The symmetrical and rhythmical structure of v. 2 (כִּי בָּא הַחֲלוֹם בְּרֹב עִנְיָן וְקוֹל כְּסִיל בְּרֹב דְּבָרִים) posits an analogy of the relationship (a is to b as is c to d) between daily stress and dreams (a, b) and the many words and verbiage of a fool (c, d). Such a low appreciation of the psychosomatic imprints of daily life in dreams would have been ardently approved of by Artemidorus (e.g. *Onir.* 1.2.38–41, 1.6.1–9; 4. *prol.* 60–70), his predecessors,[7] Macrobius (*In Somnium Scipionis* 1.3.3) or others. However, there is a difference in the reductive approach on the part of the Hebrew sage, according to whom there is nothing more to say about dreams, but the warning. Artemidorus or Iamblichus (*De mysteriis* 3.1), presupposing meaningless dreams (among others), concentrated on the predictive qualities of dreams, whereas the interest of Ecclesiastes was in the cultivation of religious awe in the Temple.

The attitude of Sirach to dreams is as fervent as it is one-sided. In a similar way to Qoheleth, dreams turn into a dangerous, deceitful ballast in his eyes. In Sir 40:1–10, the sinful character of humanity is demonstrated through the inability to relax even in dreams (cf. Cant 3:1). Being nothing but exaggerations of strong impressions (the day's residues in 40:6f.), dreams are one of the manifestations of the overall sinfulness of mankind. It is sin that is in the background of the illusiveness of the dream world (cf. 40:8). According to 34:1–8, dreams are delusions and are impure because they only mirror the inferior human nature (v. 3f.). Consequently, Sirach voices his warning not to believe in them. Although the authority of the Book of Genesis forces him to admit (Sir 34:6) the existence of unobjectionable dreams coming from the Most High (to Jacob in Gen 28:11–17 etc.), Sirach does not mention this in his praise of the ancestors (Sir 44:19–23 with the godly dreamers Jacob and possibly Abraham, cf. Gen 15; and Sir 46:13–20 with Samuel, cf. 1 Sam 3). A true lover of Scripture (Sir 39:1),[8] he had to positively ignore the allegorical (Gen 40f.) as well as the direct visions (Gen 46:2–4) in the Scriptures to be able to show dreams as such in such a negative light, in his effort to warn against faith in some quite usual mantic methods including dreams (Sir 34:5; cf. 1 Sam 28:6 with the regular means of divination by means of prophets, lots and dreams).

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6 Schwienhorst-Schönberger, *Kohelet,* 314f., 316, takes into account that the 'dreams' could be nothing more than "verschleiertes Bewusstsein" or "illusorische Wirklichkeitsvorstellungen"; cf. the very similar idea of Plato in *Resp*. 476c (Bittrich, "Outline," 75 n. 19).

7 On the predecessors of the system used by Artemidorus or Macrobius see Kessels, "Ancient," 411–414.

8 Cf. also Artemidorus, *Onir., prol.*, 1.26, 2.15f., 3.22f. or 34.8 and many other places.

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The degree of significance attributed to dreams is variously balanced in both primitive and more developed cultures[9] and on this scale, Sirach represents an extremely critical approach. His words give the impression of a strong and strongly opinionated personality, and not only in comparison with the more developed theories mentioned above. We may compare it to the fine observations concerning psycho-somatic mirror-image dreams and their dependence on the moral quality of the receiver, e.g. in the charming passage on the female objects of erotic desires in Artemidorus *Onir*. 4. *prol*. 93–6.[10]

Sirach's resolution is also striking in the view of the ancient and widespread simple awareness of the ambiguity of dreams, as immortalised by the image of two gates in the *Odyssey* (19.559–67). Fruitless dreams come through the gate of ivory (ἐλέφας), because they delude (ἐλεφαίρονται, cf. v. 561, 565), while the more welcome mantic dreams reach the recipient through the gate of horn (and they do so in the allegorical form, v. 560, 535–58). Considering the dominant role of Homer in Hellenistic culture, Sirach would enter the Hellenistic cultural competition (cf. Sir *prol*.) with his unusual, reductive, and less substantiated view.[11] A weak point of his concept, as compared with the Greek tradition, may be seen in its lack of any elaborate dualism of body and soul.[12] This kind of dualism helped to keep dreaming open to a wider variety of interpretations in which they could be identified according to their origin as useful (diagnostic, mantic) or otherwise and only then rejected.

An example is provided by Herophilus, a physician who was almost a contemporary of Sirach, who distinguished between god-sent dreams, the soul's images of the future, external images entering people on a mechanical basis, and/or wish-fulfilments.[13] It follows that the choice of the right type of interpretation was itself a problem; see esp. Galen *De dignotione ex insomniis*.

9 Dodds, *Greeks*, 106, 123 n. 23.

10 According to this passage, the mirror-image of a lady of erotic interest appears normally but to a morally superior gentleman a symbol of her comes, such as a ship, a piece of female clothing, a horse (cf. 1.56.48–73; Näf, "Artemidor," 200f.), etc.

11 On the image of gates cf. Oepke, "ὄναρ," 221.

12 But cf. Qoh 12:7.

13 Herophilus in Aëtius' *Placita* 5.2.3 (cf., again, Hippocrates *Vict. 4* 87.1; Galen *Dignot. insomn.* 833.7–18). The last two types of Herophilus arise from the notoriously unclear and most probably severely damaged text of Aëtius according to Dodds' reasonable interpretation (Dodds, *Greeks*, 124 n. 28; Näf, *Traum*, 78, presupposes three); Democritus already (5–4th cent. BCE) thought of prediction in terms of the outer particles, fr. A 77, 136f., B 166, 10a (Bittrich, "Outline," 72f.; Kessels, "Ancient," 414, in the frame of the whole section on Herophilus, 414–24; Vítek, *Věštění*, 313).

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Judging from Sirach's pronouncements about physicians (38:1–15), he does not seem to know about this ambiguous part of their trade.[14]

The different concepts of the origins of dreams in Jeremiah, Ecclesiastes and Sirach were joined in this section to bring out that the issue was worth a rather contentious presentation by them. It is due to the fact that they struggle for the right role of dreams in religious life, and that very directly, especially Jeremiah. The comparative antique passages were used only to underscore it. They could hardly have been used in a greater extent, because the extensive antique thinking on dream origins does not enter this particular, 'hot' type of contexts, as we will see in the following section.

3 Non-divine Origin of Dreams in Greco-Roman Traditions

Without doubt, there were traditions also on the Greco-Roman side that seriously denied the predictive value of dreams or of some types of them and even of divination as such, beginning perhaps as early as with the Pre-Socratic Xenophanes in the 6–5th cent. BCE.[15] Later on, Aristotle tried to show by a technical analysis of dreaming in his *De insomniis* that the source of dreams is a perception reshaped by the faculty of φαντασία, which not only creates a unified whole from the data delivered by the five senses, but also operates further with the data. In this view, dreams are something close to a 'secondary perception', not being any of sensory perception, thinking (διανοούμενον), or meaning (δόξα).[16] Nevertheless, the imaginative part of the soul, φαντασία or τὸ φανταστικόν, may be at work under the facultative conditions of both perceiving and thinking[17] in our sleep, while the sleeper may or may not realise it.[18] Although in his earlier years Aristotle found reasons to believe that the soul,

14 However, prayer is a point that is shared between Sirach, who recommends it (38:9–15), and Hippocrates' *De victu 4* (87, 89.132, 90.63; while books 1–3 contain nothing religious). Like this passage on medicine, the remark in Sir 40:8, implying that animals do dream, is yet another bridge to the world of Hellenic thought; cf. Aristotle *Div. somn.* 463b12, Diogenes Laërtius 8.32.3f. (another reference to animals dreaming is given by Näf, *Traum*, 212 n. 423). But both connections are too weak to make a bridge to the Greek world, since the idea of the commendability of prayer for the sick and of animals dreaming (in fact, all mammals and birds dream; Birbaumer, "Traum," 564) could very easily have developed independently.

15 Fr. DK B A 52 from Cicero *Div.* 1.3.5; Dodds, *Greeks*, 118; Weber, *Kaiser*, 34 with n. 40.

16 *Insomn.* 459a8–11, 458b30–2; the observation that sleepers do not perceive had already been made by Hippocrates *Vict. 4* 86.12.

17 *Insomn.* 458b18, 22f., 459a7, 462a6f., 29.

18 *Insomn.* 462a7.

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connected with the divine, has a faculty to foretell,[19] later, in *De divinatione per somnia* and elsewhere, he came to negate the origin of dreams in god.[20]

Since the divinity could of course send precognitive dreams to wise men and would have no problem to bestow them even by daylight, Aristotle, denying predictive dreams a divine fountainhead (despite the canonisation of the idea by *Il.* 1.63), finds himself wondering why mantic dreams come to 'just anyone' (τοῖς τυχοῦσι) and not only to the 'best and most reasonable' (*Div. somn.* 462b20–4).[21] Nevertheless, the philosopher was still able to stipulate predictivity for dreams, without divine involvement.[22] The pivotal term of the argument, κινήσεις, could be rendered as something like 'stimuli', 'impulses', or 'movements'. These may cause signs dependent on important outside events, such as illnesses, to appear in our soul. The process also works in the opposite direction, i.e. impulses originating in the soul stand as causes behind what we do when we are awake (463a3–31). But, despite the occasional status of mantic dreams as signs or causes, for by far the most part they are to be taken as accidental coincidences with reality (συμπτώματα, 426b26–463a3, a31–b11, cf. b22–31).

Here lies the crucial point of the argument. The Aristotelian κινήσεις, a transformation of the Democritean 'spectral films' or 'effluences' (εἴδωλα, ἀπόρροιαι, 464a6–12), can more easily enter those people who are especially predisposed. With their minds vacant and unobstructed by thinking, these ordinary persons, or 'just anybodies' (οἱ τυχόντες, 464a20, 22; 462b23; also treated in *Ethica Eudemia*, esp. 1248a30–b1),[23] enjoy openness to impulses stimulated by events that have already passed by – through the still active stimuli produced by these events. Because of such sensitivity, largely effected by the complete vacancy of their minds, their chance to receive dream images coinciding with events to come becomes considerable (*Div. somn.* 463b12–464a27). Aristotle further develops the idea by exemplifying the εὐθυόνειροι,[24] the 'direct dreamers', as friends (thanks to their openness to the κινήσεις from each other), the atrabilious (μελαγχολικοί) or madmen, for they do not produce too much of their own κινήσεις to obstruct those from outside, as is the case with more intelligent people, 'the most reasonable' (464a20). Additionally, "owing to their mutability,

19 Fr. 12a of *De philosophia* (ed. Ross); *Ethica Eudemia* 1248a1–b6; Bittrich, "Outline," 75f. with n. 26; Dodds, *Greeks*, 120.

20 Gallop, *Aristotle*, 5. Cf. Artemidorus' remark in *Onir.* 1.6.9–14 about Aristotle's διαπορεῖν.

21 Cf. *Div. somn.* 463b12–22, 464a21f.

22 For the treatise see esp. Bittrich, "Outline," 75, 77f., 95; also, Price, "Future," 17 with n. 27; Hanson, "Dreams," 1400.

23 But cf. *Ethica Nicomachea* 1209b9–11.

24 *Div. somn.* 463b17, *Eth. Eud.* 1248a40.

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the series of movements deploys quickly before their minds,"[25] so they are substantially more apt to prevision future events by widening the scope of the occasions for the prevision. Furthermore, they chain (συνείρουσιν) assonances successfully and their impetuousness (σφοδρότης) ensures that their own 'movements' do not yield too easily to concurring κινήσεις (464a28–b16).

With regard to the focus of our study, we may abandon further details or implications of the treatise with the observation that the Aristotelian concept of precognition amounts to a natural, this-worldly process, albeit substantially irrational, yielding to a description in sober, technical terms – even though the terminology had to be invented for this particular purpose by the philosopher. It is in agreement with Sirach in the rejection of any supernatural source of dreams. But unlike Sirach, his approximate contemporary of Stagira continued to assign some predictive value (cf. 462b12–14) to dreams deprived of supernatural qualities, so that they remained a "space of significance",[26] relevant for the future.

In his *De divinatione*[27] Cicero used the now lost work of Posidonius (2nd–1st cent. BCE) and other Stoics, written to defend divination against some attacks that appeared during the 3rd and 2nd cent. BCE.[28] It has the form of a dialogue, confronting the pros (1.39–65)[29] and cons (2.119–48). In the matter of oniromancy, it puts forward some considerable reservations,[30] thus continuing the enlightened tradition started by Aristotle.[31] Beside some rather rhetorical arguments,[32] Cicero also offers a range of more strictly rational ones. Perhaps his most important reason for doubting the predictive value of dreams is referring their source to the human soul. Destined to constant activity by its very nature, the soul is adequately busy with the body and limbs by day, but it cannot avoid correspondingly inadequate unrest in the passive state of sleep, and so it produces dreams (2.128, 139f.). If a successful prediction is possible, because of long-term observations of fixed connections between certain

25 *Div. somn.* 433a31–b1 (trans. J.I. Beare, in Barnes, *Complete*, 739).

26 Walde, "Dreams," 123.

27 Price, "Future," 29.

28 Zeno, Cleanthes, Chrysippus (in two unpreserved books), Diogenes, Antipater (according to Cicero *Div.* 1.6, 2.101f., 130); Bittrich, "Outline," 78f., n. 36, 40; Cancik, "*Imago*," 171; Hanson, "Dreams," 1400 n. 38; Walde, "Dreams," 123.

29 The author's brother Quintus is speaking in this passage.

30 Cicero was not the first Stoic to have such an opinion; cf. Panaitios in *Div*. 1.6.

31 Cancik, "*Imago*," 172f.; Miller, *Dreams*, 9, 44.

32 Such as that dreams are worthless because we pay no attention to many dreams we dream almost every night, or that we do not listen to the utterances of fools, which have just as little sense as dreams (2.121f.; cf. some further arguments of a less strictly rational type in 125, 129).

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events and the corresponding dreams, this only applies on the abstract level of *sympatheia*, i.e. the fact that even mutually distant elements are interconnected by one cosmic network and together (συμ-) are subject to the same influences (-πάθεια, *Div.* 2.13). The rules of *sympatheia*, however, do not extend as far as to the details, such as the connection between the dreaming of an individual and the place where a treasure is hidden (2.124, 142–4). According to Cicero, it makes no sense to attribute the source of dreams to the gods. They have no reason to deliver their messages to people in allegorical form while they are asleep or to bless them with direct, non-symbolic visions, since they are able to do so directly to those who are awake by day; and also, wandering about at night, delivering dreams, would not be in tune with the sublime nature of gods (2.124–6, 129, 132). Cicero wrote in keeping with the more sober nature of Roman religion and philosophical enlightenment. As we have seen, the part of the Greco-Roman intellectual tradition that denied predictive value to dreams was careful to treat each of the possible dream-sources on its own, as well as to substantiate the arguments. We do not find such a differentiating approach in Sirach or Qoheleth.

We can find an almost perfect counterpart to the strong biblical tendency to confine true and significant dreams only to the chosen ones or to reject the possibility of useful dreams altogether (Jeremiah, Sirach, Ecclesiastes) in Synesius' *Insomn*. 13.5f. He uses the well-known speech of Homer's Penelope about the two gates (*Odyssea* 19.569ff.), only to negate its basic idea of false and true dreams. According to Synesius' programmatically open overall approach,[33] each and every dream has a message to deliver. It is only our personal lack of morality and purity that is to blame when we cannot make sense of our dreams. The Platonic idea[34] behind this teaching is that our vices obscure our πνεῦμα, which is, tentatively speaking, a kind of monitor. It displays things, including dreams, originating from our soul or intellect, or even from the gods (ch. 6; 10.2–4, 14.5–15.1, cf. 4.1). Some of the contents displayed by πνεῦμα also come from the lower sphere of the material world. Therefore, it is good to keep our πνεῦμα clean (ch. 6, 15) from pollution by unrestrained diet or similar disturbances (11.1) which usually provoke unreadable dreams.[35] Perhaps also motivated by the purpose of *De insomniis* to virtually propagate dreams as a privileged channel,

33 Oniromancy is, in his eyes, open to everyone, is present anywhere (11.2–13.4), is not controllable from outside (12.4, 6), and access to it is almost unlimited by sex, age, or social position (5.1f, 13.1), etc.

34 Also used by Philo, *De aeternitate mundi* 2 (Budd, "Dreams," 512); outside the Platonic tradition cf. Democritus, fr. B 174.

35 The mentions or implications of diet are occasional in Synesius; what is preponderant by him is the moral quality. Cf. e.g. Hippocrates *Vict. 4* 92.11–3.

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connecting the divine with the human, Synesius' assigning some meaning to every dream is a unique position among all documented theories or accounts.[36]

Sirach and Ecclesiastes as the resolute deniers of the divine origins of dreams would find a supporting voice in Aristotle and Cicero. Both pairs of authors aimed at suppressing what for them was a dangerous superstition, but still the harmony of their voices would not be perfect, since the latter two presented their respective detailed views of the possibility of the non-divine predictions.

4 Dreams and Body

The relationship between food and dreams that we have come across at the end of the preceding section also deserves some attention with respect to the issue of the sources of dreams.[37] We may begin here with the text of Isaiah 29:7f (NRSV):

> And the multitude of all the nations that fight against Ariel, all that fight against her and her stronghold, and who distress her, shall be like a dream, a vision in the night.[8] Just as when a hungry person dreams of eating and wakes up still hungry, or a thirsty person dreams of drinking and wakes up faint, still thirsty, so shall the multitude of all the nations be that fight against Mount Zion.

The supposition of a natural connection between the bodily and/or the mental state and of its possible reflection in dreams is shared by the biblical and antique concepts of dreams. What is also common is the linking of such dreams, determined by the psycho-somatic condition, to the perspective of futility. There is, however, a substantial difference between the two cultures in the way this perspective is applied.

Isaiah presents this type of dream as nothing but illusive wish-fulfilment, leading to frustration on awakening. The main point of the prophetic image (in its final form)[38] is the surprising identification of the aggressor with the dream (v. 7); cf. Ps 73:20. Something like that is completely alien to antique dreams.

36 However, in later, Byzantine sources it asserted itself; Weber, *Kaiser*, 40.

37 For the Near East, cf. Botterweck, חָלַם, p. 990.

38 For the historical background of v. 8 within the broader framework of the Old Testament prophecy see Beuken, *Jesaja 28–39*, 107f.

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Isaiah uses the imagery of this type of dream in his engaged preaching on matters of life and death.

Unlike in the Near East, where indigestion was never considered as a source of dreams,[39] in the Greco-Roman culture dreams originating in excessive or insufficient consumption of food or drink were known and associated mostly with futility of the intellectual kind, as they were irrelevant for mantic or medical diagnosis,[40] or even regardless of that (Aristotle *Insomn*. 461a9–25). A nuanced position is presented by Plato in *Resp*. 571c–572a. The concept of a tripartite soul enabled him to teach his readers to calm τὸ ἐπιθυμητικόν and τὸ θυμοειδές in the soul by providing them with the right measure of nourishment (571e1) and of peace and quiet, so that τὸ λογιστικόν might awaken and see things past, present, and future (572a3–5).[41] Food and relaxation are there to calm the two lower parts of the soul, so as not to disturb our sleep, which can bring closer contact with the truth, once we have meditated on "beautiful words and thoughts" before going to bed (571d7, 572a7).

In contradistinction to the *Republic*, Plato's other theory of divination by dreams, in *Timaeus* 70d–72b,[42] was connected with the lowest part of the soul. Having nothing to do with λόγος, it is, on the other hand, able to receive such irrational influences as precognition in dreams, even though it cannot judge them itself with its own limited powers. Thus, the creators of mankind found a good use for the animal soul, "longing for food and drink" (70d7), and connected it with both the mantic truth from above and the rational soul that steers the lower one by means of the images it sends to it. Among the bodily organs, carrying out this untraditional philosophical function of receiving and depicting the images sent to the ἐπιθυμητικόν is traditionally assigned to the liver. In connection with mantic dreams, Plato calls it μαντεῖον, the 'seat of divination' (*Tim*. 71e2). To the extent to which the rational and the irrational soul may be called 'sources' of dreams, they show substantial differences, especially due to connexion of the two passages by similar wording ("to reach the truth", τῆς ἀληθείας ἅπτεσθαι, *Tim*. 71e1, *Resp.* 571a7).

39 Oppenheim, *Interpretation*, 227; Weber, *Kaiser*, 50, n. 159.

40 Cicero *Div.* 1.60; Artemidorus *Onir.* 1.1.5–30, esp. 11–4; 1.7; Macrobius *Comm.* 1.3.4; Galen *Dignot. insomn.* 833.4–7; cf. Aristotle *De somno et vigilia* 458a10–25, Hippocrates *Vict. 4* 88.6.

41 Cf. *Il.* 1.69f., according to which the seer Calchas was able to see the three chronological spheres. This is in accord with Plato's aim of stepping into Homer's shoes as the paramount figure of all Greek education.

42 Also *Tim.* 45e–46a; Van Lieshout, *Dreams*, 134; Bittrich, "Outline," 73–5; cf. also Hanson, "Dreams," 1399; Miller, *Dreams*, 39.

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It can also be noticed that dreams do not enjoy mantic status in Plato's thought with full consistency. In *Theaetetus* 157e–158d he conceives of dreams as pure illusions, while in *Sophist* 266b–c, dreams come into play as images (εἴδωλα) of material things with 'daemonic' status (cf. b7), as opposed to the things themselves, made by the gods.

Despite the fact that the body–dream relation is barely mentioned in the Bible, it is used in a manner quite unusual in antiquity that concentrated on it especially in medical or philosophical contexts.

5 Deuteronomic Criterion

A remarkable perspective on evaluating dreams is presented in Deut 13:2–6. We quote verses 2 and 3 (NRSV):

> If prophets or those who divine by dreams appear among you and promise you omens and portents, and the omens and portents declared by them take place, and they say, 'Let us follow other gods' (whom you have not known), 'and let us serve them,'[3] you must not heed the word of those prophets or those who divine by dreams; for the LORD your God is testing you, to know whether you indeed love the LORD your God with all your heart and soul.

With energetic clarity, the 'Moses' of Deuteronomy demands a higher standpoint, from which even those omens that have come true are to be judged. This norm lies in the loyalty of faith that is substantiated by the deeds of God (v. 4–6). Even such a self-evidently authoritative event as a correct foretelling must be examined for conformity to the principle of faith precisely in God 'you have known', i.e., on your way from Egypt. Not to be content with the correctly guessed outcome of dreams and to search for the correct assessment of such an eventuality in a broader context is a singular requirement in the context of oniromancy and is unheard of in the mass of relevant Greco-Roman material. This approach is all the more remarkable as the divine origin of dreams is not contested, as can be inferred from v. 4.

The author dared to redefine the divine quality of a dream from the usual imparting of a highly privileged status to a test (the root נסה recalls the tests of faith in Gen 22:1 or Exod 15:25). In this view, the only thing that makes a correctly interpreted dream from the true God acceptable is the context of cordial loyalty to Him "who brought you out of the land of Egypt and redeemed you

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from the house of slavery" (v. 6). The religious legitimacy of the prophet has a higher status than either successful oniromantic technique[43] or certainty of the source of the dream in God himself.[44] Here, as elsewhere in Deuteronomy,[45] we encounter a ground-breaking faith. Here, unlike in Jeremiah, the issue of the right recipient of legitimate dreams (Jer 28:32) is not at stake. Neither is any predictive value of dreams *en bloc* denied, as in Sirach or Ecclesiastes. What we see in Deuteronomy is the consequences of a radical re-contextualisation. The primary criterion is the spiritual milieu, where God, the Saviour from Egypt, is the sole sovereign. Outside this framework, even mantically valid dreams are irrelevant and the diviners liable to nothing less than the death penalty (v. 6). All of this is, naturally, quite alien to a polytheistic mind.

6 Conclusions

We have seen that the biblical perspective on where dreams come from – when the issue turns up at all – is determined by an atmosphere of conflict (Jeremiah, Deuteronomy), or at least tension (Sirach).[46] Naturally, under such circumstances, it is hardly likely that any motivation for detailed theories about possible sources of dreams would arise. In consequence, our information about the biblical ideas in this respect is quite scarce and the picture appears quite simple. Sometimes just one possible source of dreams is acknowledged (psychosomatic in Qoh 5:2.6, Isa 29:7f, the human heart [?] in Zech 10:2), and sometimes two mutually exclusive ones (i.e. God and humans: Sir 34:1–8; 40:1–10[47] and Jer 31:23–6; 27:9, 29:8f; 23:25–32). The passage Deut 13:2–6 ascribes dreams to God and does not mention any other source, but it seems to imply possibly also false dreams in v. 2. Outside this group of texts, the source(s) of dreams is/are not considered, either directly, or indirectly; they are probably simply presupposed (e.g. the divine spirit in Joel 3:1f).[48] On the whole, dreams in the

43 Independently of whether allegorical or theorematic dreams are implied here.

44 Cf. the difference between God as the source of the miracles of Moses and Aaron and the Egyptian sorcerers at Pharaoh's court in Exod 7:3.9–12.21f., 8:2f. (eventually, the sorcerers lose their breath in 8:18; see esp. 9:11) or the case of Simon the sorcerer and the greater power that the apostle Philip has from God (Acts 8:4–25, esp. v. 13 and 20).

45 E.g. in the case of the reform of the location of worship in Deut 12:5.13–18.26.

46 Or at least it is a part of a story; cf. Dan 2:28. The struggle of Ecclesiastes and Sirach seems to be of a somewhat more intellectual kind.

47 It is only the somewhat unwilling concession of Sirach in 34:6 (dreams from the Most High) that classes him here.

48 For example, the psychosomatic source in Isa 29:8, God in Gen 31:24 or his angel in Matt 1:20 or a "combination" of both, as in Gen 31:11–3, cf. 28:12, etc.

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Bible may come from God, from the human body and/or mind, and from the human heart as a source of false prophecy.

On the contrary, in Greek or Roman antiquity the sources of dreams were the object of focused inquiry. Although what the right view might be was contested, the atmosphere was never one of tension going beyond intellectual competition. But there was a price to pay for this milder, more "armchair" milieu. The issue of dreams and their interpretation, in itself quite enigmatic and ambiguous, was further complicated by the scientific approach, leading to a large variety of views, and so the answer to the question of where dreams come from was eventually still more elusive. The learned tradition collected no small number of developed ideas and thinkers had to find their way through the multitude and variety of inherited problems. With respect to the question of the sources of dreams, we saw a serious reductive approach (Aristotle, Cicero), a more or less organic combination of the inherited problems (Philo, Galen, Synesius), or even the abandonment of the problem and leaving it open without explicitly acknowledging it (Artemidorus).

According to the Graeco-Roman thinkers, dreams can originate solely or partly in the outer world, like the atomistic εἴδωλα, and be related to the soul in various ways (Democritus, Lucretius, Aristotle).[49] They can also come from the psychosomatic sphere, either with medical diagnostic relevance (Hippocrates, Galen), or without it – as by-products of wishful thinking, residues of the daily mental activity, intoxication, etc. Since time immemorial (Homer), the origin of dreams had also been assigned to the realm of the god(s), lesser divine beings (heroes, angels,[50] and δαίμονες),[51] or the human soul. How demanding it was to marshal the various possibilities is something we may illustrate by means of the attempts of three thinkers.

Synesius, in the wake of Iamblichus' Neoplatonic *Myst*. 3.1–3, derives some dreams from the openness of pure souls to the activity of true reality (he also uses a finer distinction between the ideas in the soul and the ideas in the intellect, cf. *Insomn*. 4.1). Some of these blessed dreams may exceptionally be direct

49 Democritus, fr. *DK* 68 A 77, A 136f., B 166; Lucretius *De rerum natura* 4.720–819, 960–1022 (Cancik, "*Imago*," 174–7; Näf, "Artemidor," 195; Vítek, *Věštění*, 313).

50 Identified by the culture-crossing Philo in *Somn.* 1.141.1 with the δαίμονες of the Greek philosophers (Miller, *Dream*, 61).

51 E.g. Diogenes Laërtius 8.32.1–3, Plutarch *De defectu oraculorum* 416c4 (Miller, *Dreams*, 56–65; Graf, "Dreams," 220f.; Stroumsa, "Dreams," 196). A Christian, Tertullian, with his view comprising God, demons, and the human soul as the sources of dreams (*De anima* 47.1–3), is left out, even though he is indebted to non-Christian thought or ideas, as are most Church Fathers. (*De anima* 42–57 is the first overall Latin theory of dreams; Stroumsa, "Dreams," 197; Miller, *Dreams*, 67–70).

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visions or their meaning may be veiled on the 'screen' of the πνεῦμα, while most usual dreams, again allegorical, are brought about by the εἴδωλα streaming onto the πνεῦμα from the outside world (14.5–15.2, cf. 4.3–5). Synesius' combining of philosophical theories seems quite doubtful, as does his sophistic construction, built by connecting the εἴδωλα with the πνεύματα, called likewise εἴδωλα by him, in order to express rhetorically the ability of the former to bring meaning and of the latter to receive meaning.[52] The atomistic inspiration, Neoplatonic soul, and gods meet in one place somewhat inorganically.[53]

In contradistinction to the more practical Synesius, Artemidorus, or Galen, who all worked with real dreams, Philo had the advantage of choosing what to interpret[54] (the Pentateuch) and managed to utilise the possibilities offered by his Platonic background. Besides thinking basically in Middle-Platonic terms in his *De somniis*, Philo, similarly to Cicero, also made use of the system of the Stoic Posidonius and gave it his own shape, without the Ciceronian invalidation of the oniromancy.[55] He did not allow himself to become trapped in the net of the source problem and assigned individual dreams in Genesis to the various ontological levels at his disposal in a creative manner. Between the Jewish and Greek types of thought, he took the Greek side,[56] while keeping the Scriptures as the object of his thought.

Philo 'paired' Joseph's dreams (Gen 37:5–11; ch. 40f.) with the third and weakest of the types he distinguished. Joseph represents the type containing a good deal of the Platonic this-worldly orientation to the perplexing sensory sphere, even though Joseph also maintains contact with τὸ λογικόν or λογισμός (cf. *De somniis* 2.8–16). Thus, Joseph is very much imbued in the sphere of the mere δόξα, since he says, according to Philo's Septuagint Gen 37:7, that he only 'thought' (ᾤμην) of himself and his brothers binding the sheaves in his dream (*Somn.* 2.15–17). The soul moves of itself while dreaming and, raving in divine possession, foretells the future by its power of foreknowledge (2.1.4–2.1). This is contrasted with Joseph's father Jacob, who 'saw' directly in his dreams (cf. the expressions connected with sight: ἰδοὺ κλῖμαξ in Gen 28:12, εἶδον … ἰδοὺ οἱ

52 For the most striking of Synesius' philosophical blunders here in 15.2 see Lang, *Das Traumbuch*, 88–90.

53 Not to speak of the confusing contribution of the Aristotelian matter and form further complicating the tangle in 15.2. Bittrich, "Outline," 89f., views the Democritean inspiration much less critically.

54 Cf. Miller, *Dreams*, 90; Bittrich, "Outline," 80.

55 Kessels, "Ancient," 369.

56 He keeps in touch with Greek thinking; cf. the expressions κορυβαντιᾶν and ἐνθουσιῶσα in 2.1.5, Moses as ἱεροφάντης 2.3.1, world-soul 1.1.2, etc.

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τράγοι … in 31:10, 11). While the Joseph type needs interpretation (the 'oniro-critical knowledge', *Somn*. 2.4.3), the direct dream visions are the more valuable. This second type of dreaming, according to Philo, comes from the ability of one's spiritual intellect (νοῦς, 1.2.2 or διάνοια, 2.2.3) to move in accordance with the Platonic world-soul,[57] and thus to transcend itself in divine frenzy and to be capable of foresight. The archetype of these visions is Jacob's dream in Bethel (Gen 28:10–22). Like the third one, this type is also enigmatic, but to a lesser degree ("not too clear and not too dark", *Somn*. 2.3.4–4.1). The first and highest dream type of Philo is 'paired' not only with the idea of absolute clarity and directness, but also with God's own initiative in sending the dream (2.2.1–3, 2.3.1–4). Since Philo's original first book about this type of dream has not survived, unlike the original fourth and fifth ones (cf. 1.1),[58] we are forced to resort to guesses based on the corresponding dreams in Genesis and on the absence of the treatment of some of them in what we have today of *De somniis*. This leads to the dreams of Abimelech (Gen 20:3–7) and Laban (31:24).

In summary, Philo does not seem to have reckoned with a purely natural, psychosomatic type of dream.[59] We may say that Philo's thinking about the sources of God-sent dreams is neatly arranged around the Platonic terms. The grading of dreams is derived from the ratio of directness and allegory in them. Even though Philo interprets the dreams from Genesis he considers as God-sent and not actual dreams of individuals like Artemidorus, his distinction could apply to real dreams as well.

We now turn to Artemidorus. He may not have been very clear on the problem, even though he claimed he was not in doubt as to whether the sources of dreams were divine or human (*Onir*. 1.6.9). On the one hand, he asserts that dreams about petitions to gods concerning health do come from the gods, provided the dream is not evoked by fears or sadness (1.6; cf. 4.22.37–45). Predictive dreams can also come from the gods, when they come suddenly (4.3.1–3). On the other hand, in 4.2.82–113, Artemidorus does not seem to be sure whether prophetic dreams originate in the gods or in the soul (esp. v. 100, 113), since both speak (soul: 3.22.14–18; 4.27; gods: 4.63.3, 4.71; 2.69.1–3). It remains ambiguous and Artemidorus obviously "avoids the snares of offering views on the causation of dreams".[60] We may infer that if Artemidorus had addressed the question consistently, it would only obscure and complicate his main purpose,

57 Plato, *Timaeus* 30b–31a, 34b–35a; cf. Plotinus, *Enneades* 4.2, 8 or 9.

58 Bittrich, "Outline," 80; Oepke, "ὄναρ," 231.

59 Näf, *Traum*, 130.

60 Price, "Future," 16–18, 20, 29f.

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which was the experienced, "tailored", methodical, context-sensitive interpretation of dreams as future-oriented allegories.[61] He left the problem to the more philosophical minds who would be interested in rationally disproving the theories opposing theirs. Artemidorus is less interested in theorising about what dreams are or where they come from than in the question of how they are to be understood.[62]

We may conclude on a general note, that in each of the two cultural and religious worlds we have been examining, the disputes about the source(s) of dreams were taking place in observably different milieux. Summarizing now the difference in question, we take the risk of overdrawing it. It is natural for a comparison to concentrate on dissimilarity of the *comparanda*, but we have to be aware that the concentration on just one aspect may make the compared cultures (especially the biblical one) stand out as seemingly more singular than they really were. Conversely, if we pointed our attention to similarities, we would surely find a good number of those, while the distinctive features would be suppressed.

The atmosphere of the biblical texts may be characterised by conflict and by relatively clear-cut answers, whereas the minds of Greco-Roman antiquity, which we have tried to mirror by the most representative theories, were not so immersed in conflict, but their more distanced approach encouraged the growth of complexity in the reflection. There were certainly theoretical disputes (e.g. Artemidorus against the possibly Epicurean enemies of oniromancy),[63] but the polytheistic, henotheistic, or philosophical set of mind did not incline to the biblical either-or type of conflict with such serious (Jer 23:31f.) or even absolute consequences (23:38–40; 28:16f.; Deut 12:6). The situation of the Greek and Roman thinkers did not resemble the situation of Jeremiah or the author of Deuteronomy, who struggled rather over the identification of good and evil than over fathoming the nature of dreams and their source(s). It is the monotheistic emphasis on the difference between God and the world that seems to account for the rather cautious approach to dreams as a necessary (Ecclesiastes, Sirach) or a usual (Jeremiah) phenomenon of this world. In the area of Greco-Roman antiquity, the friendlier and more inquisitive approach was co-determined by the concept of cosmic *sympatheia* and by the Platonic idea of the divine character of the world.[64]

61 So also Näf, "Artemidor," 197.

62 Cf. Bittrich, "Outline," 95, 71.

63 1.*prol.* 6f., 4.*prol.* 36–40; Price, "Future," 12, 29; Walde, "Dreams," 123.

64 Plato *Tim.* 32c–34b. (Cf. Graf, "Dreams," 216f.).

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Ecclesiastes and Ecclesiasticus in Dispute: Are Dreams Permissible?

Filip Čapek

1 Introduction

Generally speaking, the function of dreams in the majority of biblical texts is to stimulate positive action or activity in favour of the people of Israel, either individually or collectively. Essentially, dreams act as a corrective to previous erroneous developments or are indicative of the future. What is revealed in a dream has an impact on daily life. Nevertheless, the two chosen texts from the Second Temple period (here specifically the late 3rd century and first half of the 2nd century BCE)[1] convey different attitudes towards dreams and represent a particular perspective within the Hebrew Bible. Both texts, although they contradict each other in many other aspects, present the same question, that is, whether dreams serve as a mirror of reality or as a means of escape from it. And if dreams are a mirror of reality, what sort of reflection is it? The task of our study is simple: first, to introduce the texts under scrutiny and then to examine the theological message they both convey.

2 Ecclesiastes

Dreams are mentioned in the Book of Qoheleth only two times and that in a relatively clearly defined unit of 4:17–5:6. Though this unit was considered as an *addendum* in older scholarship and it was recommended to omit it entirely,[2] the text represents "a coherent literary unit consisting of a series of negative exhortations"[3] and consistently develops a previous line of reasoning. Moreover, the integrity of the unit is substantiated by typical phraseology and general mood of the 'author'.

1 For the dating of the two books and the relation between them see Schwienhorst-Schönberger, *Kohelet*, 101–103, 550–553; Gordis, *Koheleth*, 349–350; Corley, "Qoheleth and Sirach."

2 Podechard, *L'Ecclésiaste*, 334–335.

3 Schoors, *Ecclesiastes*, 370.

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4:17 שמר רגליך כאשר תלך אל־בית האלהים וקרוב לשמע מתת הכסילים זבח
כי־אינם יודעים לעשות רע: 5:1 אל־תבהל על־פיך ולבב אל־ימהר להוציא דבר לפני
האלהים כי האלהים בשמים ואתה על־הארץ על־כן יהיו דבריך מעטים: 2 כי בא
החלום ברב ענין וקול כסיל ברב דברים: 3 כאשר תדר נדר לאלהים אל־תאחר לשלמו
כי אין חפץ בכסילים את אשר־תדר שלם: 4 טוב אשר לא־תדר משתדור ולא תשלם:
5 אל־תתן את־פיך לחטיא את־בשרך ואל־תאמר לפני המלאך כי שגגה היא למה יקצף
האלהים על־קולך וחבל את־מעשה ידיך: 6 כי ברב **חלמות** והבלים ודברים הרבה כי
את־האלהים ירא:

5:1 [resp. 4:17] Guard your steps when you go to the house of God; to draw near to listen is better than to offer the sacrifice of fools; for they do not know that they are doing evil. 2 Be not rash with your mouth, nor let your heart be hasty to utter a word before God, for God is in heaven, and you upon earth; therefore let your words be few. 3 For a dream comes with much business, and a fool's voice with many words. 4 When you vow a vow to God, do not delay paying it; for he has no pleasure in fools. Pay what you vow. 5 It is better that you should not vow than that you should vow and not pay. 6 Let not your mouth lead you into sin, and do not say before the messenger that it was a mistake; why should God be angry at your voice, and destroy the work of your hands? 7 For when dreams increase, empty words grow many: but do you fear God.

RSV

The text itself is focused on worship and its adequate practice. This is characterised by the negative delimitation of operations which one should not perform. A sacrifice offered by fools is contrasted with listening, and the speech of fools, which is abundant, is juxtaposed with slowness and moderation of speaking. The two negative features are summarised into a lesson in which dreams play their role: one should not be too eloquent since after (or through) a *multitude of business* (ברב ענין) there comes a dream. Though a dream as such is not immediately considered a negative phenomenon, the second part of the verse creates a parallel which sheds bad light on the dream as it is similar to the multitude of words of the fool (קול כסיל ברב דברים). Too much work and too many words both become obstacles to adequate worship. Right here, in 5:2, dreams come into play for the first time and, at the same time, close the first part of the unit. The preliminary conclusion is as follows: any uncontrolled effort, whether speaking, offering, or any other conduct related to worship, goes wrong and resembles a dream as something unsecured by the sober reasoning of an acting worshipper. Qoheleth also calls for moderation in the sphere of cult. Since this is clear from the logic of his line of reasoning, interpretations of the text that simply emphasise a critique of cult or the general antipathy the

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author shows toward religion itself, seem to miss the point. The same goes for comments that on this basis propose to discard the unit because it deals, supposedly, too positively with the phenomena of religion.

Qoh 4:17–5:6 as a two-part handling of dreams

4:17 guarding steps × sacrifices of fools
5:1 holding one's mouth × hastiness of talking
5:2 lesson: adequacy of worship ([semi-] negative denotation of dreams)

5:3 keeping vow I.
5:4 keeping vow II.
5:5 keeping vow = holding mouth
5:6 lesson: fear of God = appropriateness of conduct (clear negative denotation of dreams)

The second part of the text, starting in 5:3, deals primarily with the matter of vows (נדר; LXX: εὐχήν) to God. The act of making a vow should, in Qohelet's view, be carried out quickly and if its performance is in danger, one should discontinue it, as it is expressed in v. 5 in "better than saying", stating that it is better that you should not make a vow than that you should make a vow and not pay (טוב אשר לא־תדר משתדור ולא תשלם). The medium pronouncing the vow is again the mouth, which is dangerous to people as such (here expressed by *body*, flesh, בשר). Hastiness in talking and making a vow results in arousing God's anger and the destruction of the work of someone's hands (here in 2 sg. m. מעשה ידיך). This part concludes the entire discourse in three steps. First, dreams in the plural (חלמות + adj. רב) are brought into immediate proximity to vanity and absurdity (again in the plural as הבלים, a typical term of Qohelet's phraseology). Second, dreams and vanity are equated to a multitude of words (דברים הרבה). All three, dreams, vanity, and multitudinousness, are subsequently used in a negative sense as contradictory to appropriacy of speaking, or, generally, to any acting. And, third, at the very end, an instruction to fear God (את־האלהים ירא) is given. Though it would no doubt be attractive to investigate what form of worship Qoheleth had in mind and how much it overlapped or clashed with the prescription of the Torah, our analysis is focused first of all on dreams. They are taken as an example of a life-threatening sphere that is dim and misty and veils reality. It is proclaimed that he who ends up here does so as a consequence of uncontrolled conduct.

To conclude, dreams serve as a symbol of an obscured mind, against which wise men should be not only vigilant but also resistant. Qohelet's interpretation

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of dreams as part of something that cannot be fully comprehended coincides with his attitude to other similar phenomena that are, in his view, beyond the human capacity to comprehend (eschatology, positive evaluation of apocalypse as an escape from death, etc.).[4] In his view, one should be sober, relying only on the immanent landscape of one's own experience.

3 Ecclesiasticus

Ecclesiasticus deals with dreams in a slightly different and also more complex way. The distinction does not only run along lines of wise versus fool and rationality in the daylight versus irrationality in the darkness of the night. Unlike Qoheleth, Sirach counts with the possibility that dreams have their meaning, provided that they are sent from the Most High in a visitation (ἐὰν μὴ παρὰ ὑψίστου ἀποσταλῇ ἐν ἐπισκοπῇ). This specifically conditioned positive apprehension of dreams is marginal in comparison to the preponderance of negative judgments of this phenomenon. However, it has to be part of the treatise since it exists. The Greek version[5] of the passage under scrutiny is as follows:

> 34:1 κεναὶ ἐλπίδες καὶ ψευδεῖς ἀσυνέτῳ ἀνδρί καὶ ἐνύπνια ἀναπτεροῦσιν ἄφρονας 2 ὡς δρασσόμενος σκιᾶς καὶ διώκων ἄνεμον οὕτως ὁ ἐπέχων ἐνυπνίοις 3 τοῦτο κατὰ τούτου ὅρασις ἐνυπνίων κατέναντι προσώπου ὁμοίωμα προσώπου 4 ἀπὸ ἀκαθάρτου τί καθαρισθήσεται καὶ ἀπὸ ψευδοῦς τί ἀληθεύσει 5 μαντεῖαι καὶ οἰωνισμοὶ καὶ ἐνύπνια μάταιά ἐστιν καὶ ὡς ὠδινούσης φαντάζεται καρδία 6 ἐὰν μὴ παρὰ ὑψίστου ἀποσταλῇ ἐν ἐπισκοπῇ μὴ δῷς εἰς αὐτὰ τὴν καρδίαν σου 7 πολλοὺς γὰρ ἐπλάνησεν τὰ ἐνύπνια καὶ ἐξέπεσον ἐλπίζοντες ἐπ᾽ αὐτοῖς 8 ἄνευ ψεύδους συντελεσθήσεται νόμος καὶ σοφία στόματι πιστῷ τελείωσις
>
> 34:1 The senseless have vain and false hopes, and dreams (ἐνύπνια) give wings to fools. 2 As one who catches at a shadow and pursues the wind, so is anyone who believes in dreams. 3 What is seen in dreams is but a reflection, the likeness of a face looking at itself. 4 From an unclean thing what can be clean? And from something false what can be true? 5 Divinations and omens and dreams are unreal, and like a woman in labour, the mind

4 On this see Krüger, "Dekonstruktion"; Michel, *Untersuchungen*, 166–183. Cf. also the positive assessment of Koheleth's eschatology in Schwienhorst-Schönberger, Kohelet, 450–453.

5 From the text discussed, in Hebrew only a fragmentary part of 34:1 is documented, in MS E from Cairo Genizah, discovered in the 19th century. For the Hebrew text of Sirach see Rüger, *Text und Textform*; and Beentjes, *Ben Sira in Hebrew*; Beentjes, *Ben Sira in Research.*

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> has fantasies. [6] Unless they are sent by intervention from the Most High (παρὰ ὑψίστου ἀποσταλῇ ἐν ἐπισκοπῇ), pay no attention to them. [7] For dreams have deceived many, and those who put their hope in them have perished. [8] Without such deceptions the law will be fulfilled, and wisdom is complete in the mouth of the faithful.
>
> Qoh 34:1-8 NRSVA

What stands at the centre of the sapiential text, though only articulated explicitly at the end, is the inner connection between the Law (νόμος) and wisdom (σοφία). Knowledge of this connection is expected, and abiding by it is considered as a virtue in a man. Dreams are, so to speak, taken as a negative foil (mentioned five times; see the diagram below) that points to what is important, within the grasp of human capacities, and what is beyond them. In other words, divinations (μαντεῖαι), omens (οἰωνισμοὶ), and dreams (ἐνύπνια) are useless, or even absurd (μάταιά ἐστιν; cf. Qoh and there his key term ματαιότης) and therefore steer their recipients toward the realm of fantasies attracting the human heart (φαντάζεται καρδία). Through this attraction, they bring only suffering and pain not dissimilar to that experienced by a woman in labour (ὡς ὠδινούσης).

Qoh 34:1–8 and the issue of dreams

I. Negative:	The senseless have vain and false hopes + and **dreams** give wings to fools.
II. Negative:	As one who catches at a shadow and pursues the wind, so is anyone who believes in **dreams**.
I. **Explication:**	What is seen in **dreams** is but a reflection, the likeness of a face looking at itself.
II. **Explication:**	From an unclean thing what can be clean? And from something false what can be true?
I. Negative:	Divinations and omens and **dreams** are unreal, and like a woman in labour, the mind has fantasies.
+ Condition:	Unless they are sent by intervention from the Most High (παρὰ ὑψίστου ἀποσταλῇ), pay no attention.
I. Explanation:	For **dreams** have deceived many, and those who put their hope in them have perished.
II. Lesson:	Without such deceptions the **Law** (νόμος) will be fulfilled, and wisdom is complete in the mouth of the faithful.

Still, since dreams had been dreamt by many characters of the Torah, the existence of this phenomenon could not be excluded completely. Dreams

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are connected with Jacob (Gen 28:12; 31:10.11;[6] cf. also 31:24) and with some of the opponents of the patriarchs, in an exemplary manner with Abimelek (Gen 20:3.6), and then, abundantly, with Joseph and other figures related to Joseph story (the episode of the brothers in 37:5–20 and 42:8; the waiter-baker episode in 40:5–23; Pharaoh's dreams in Chapter 41). However, dreams are also taken as a problematic means of God's manifestation and the list of possible human addressees is, therefore, limited. In Num 12:1–13 it is announced to Miriam and Aaron that God reveals and communicates mouth to mouth (פה אל־פה) only to Moses and if there were a prophet, this encounter happens in a vision and in a dream (במראה and בחלום). This regulation of dreams is specified further in the Deuteronomic Code (Deut 12–26). Here, in 13:2–6 a prophecy communicated by a prophet and the dreams of a dreamer (חלם חלום), are strictly rejected if these seduce Israel to abandon God and suggest going after and serving other gods (נלכה ונעבדה אלהים אחרים). Sirach is evidently trying to balance these two theological perspectives, both recorded in the Torah.

Taken from the perspective of Judaism of the 2nd century BCE, in which the Book of Ecclesiasticus was written, the interpretative context rests on the following premises: although Moses had gone and prophecy ceased, both are present in a transformed way. There is the Law, which more or less represents the "cosmic principle".[7] There is also a prophetic tradition and continuing tradition of wisdom. The task of it is to keep the possibility of dreams fundamentally open, despite all reservations. This confirms the contention in verse 3 that what is seen in dreams is but a reflection, the likeness of a face looking at itself (τοῦτο κατὰ τούτου ὅρασις ἐνυπνίων κατέναντι προσώπου ὁμοίωμα προσώπου). What is seen in such a way does not bring anything new; it is like "looking into a mirror" or, depending on the translation, as looking "in accordance with a mirror". A mirror, in the end, is what proves a man to be unwise, misled from using his reason. That which is seen in a dream (ὅρασις ἐνυπνίων) is placed on someone's face (κατέναντι προσώπου) as a reflection (ὁμοίωμα προσώπου) of what is already known and has, according to Sirach, no substantial value.[8] Luther goes even further in his negative assessment and renders the verse as follows: "dreams are nothing but pictures not based on reality".[9] Nevertheless, as already pointed out, dreams are a phenomenon that exists and are a part of

6 In Gen 31:11 God legitimises himself by reference to Jacob's previous dream stating אנכי האל בית־אל.

7 On discussion about the influence of Stoicism on Sirach see Wicke-Reuter, *Göttliche Providenz*.

8 For discussion on this I am grateful to my colleague from the Protestant Theological Faculty in Prague, Jan A. Dus.

9 In German: "Träume sind nichts anderes als Bilder ohne Wirklichkeit".

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the normative tradition of Israel recorded in the Torah, although not easy to deal with within the limits of that which is perceived as real.

4 What Makes the Difference

As has been documented, both Qoheleth and Sirach are critical of dreams, and yet there is a substantial difference. Though Sirach seems to be even more critical, which is also given by the extent of the text in question, he actually leaves more space as a result of the existence of this phenomenon in the Torah. Dreams are left and have to be left as a sort of erratic boulder in the religious praxis of Israel. However, their validity is clearly conditioned, in a way as a concession, by the authority of God, who also reveals himself through dreams. For Qoheleth, dreams serve as a symbol of an obscured mind and everyone should be resistant to them if there is an ambition in anyone to be close to the category of being 'wise'. Whereas Sirach is bound to the Torah, for Qohelet – if the second 'Torahising' epilogue is not taken into account (cf. Qoh 12:13)[10] – this is not a matter he is concerned with.

The reason for the similar and yet simultaneously different attitudes to dreams is given by the spiritual and intellectual backgrounds of Qoheleth and Sirach. The reflections on dreams of both took place at the beginning of the 2nd century BCE and most probably at the same place, in Jerusalem. Sirach felt committed to integrate dreams into the tradition of Israel,[11] though in a somewhat concealed and tricky way and only as a concession that such a matter exists.[12] He was presumably a "representative of the *sopherim/hakhamim* carrying on the work of Ezra and of the *hasidim*".[13] He was teaching his students 'in the shadow of Hellenistic education'[14] to show reverence for their own tradition. In his commentary Marböck assumes that he was a teacher, possibly with his own school or academy (cf. 51:23 οἶκος παιδείας) educating young men

10 The pivotal term relating to the Torah, i.e. commandment (מצוה), occurs here and before that only in 8:5.

11 For Sirach's background see Marböck, *Jesus Sirach*, 29–30. According to Marböck, Sirach was interested in contemporary apocalyptic literature but was reserved about it and his peculiar position was "vermittelend … zwischen Ijob und Kohelet einerseits sowie dem Spruchbuch und Tobit auf der Seite der Tradition" (30).

12 For the comment about dreams as a concession of Sirach to the older traditions of Israel, I am grateful to Filip Horáček from the Sts. Cyril and Methodius Faculty of Theology in Olomouc. See also his chapter in this book.

13 Schnabel, *Law and Wisdom*, 87.

14 Cf. Marböck, *Jesus Sirach*, 30, who refers here to B. Ego and her article "Im Schatten hellenistischer Bildung".

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about wise conduct and art of teaching.[15] Qoheleth, though presumably also a teacher, was a thinker of a markedly different sort and should be therefore as such understood. As one who is rather critical and reserved about the religious traditions of Israel, though still committed to them himself in a somewhat looser manner, he is not bound to the Torah to such an extent that, for instance, the understanding of dreams narrated there should overlap with his own perception of this phenomenon. His stance toward biblical traditions is more distanced, more ambiguous, although still in touch with them. This also applies, on the other hand, to contact with the Greek and Hellenistic heritage, which is not taken as an immediate threat to Judaism, as in cases of other biblical books, but as enriching stimulation of his own religious tradition, in which fear of God plays a prominent role.

To conclude, the chosen texts of Qoheleth and Sirach help with one item under scrutiny, viz. dreams, to understand, as if under a microscope and in micro-sound in a respective book, the spiritual and intellectual atmosphere of Jerusalem of the first decades of the 2nd century BCE in which various concurrent but also competing movements are promoting their vision of how to exist in a best sustainable way. Dreams are one instance demonstrating this vibrant atmosphere in which Second Temple Judaism was struggling in many different and parallel but also rather contradictory self-interpretative lines for its further uncertain existence.[16]

Qoheleth integrates positively the Greek tradition into his own realm of thought, appraising self-control as a virtue, resisting any uncontrolled conduct, including *all* dreams. Ecclesiasticus, on the other hand, leaves space for the same phenomena, since it is a part of the heritage of the Torah and so, despite all possible reservations, it can have its positive value. However, this positive perspective is conditioned by the Divine warranty (cf. the phrase παρὰ ὑψίστου ἀποσταλῇ), reserving meaningfulness only for *particular* dreams. As a matter of fact, a receiver of a dream stands under great pressure by the necessity to find out whether the dream comes from God or not.

15 Ibid., 30.

16 For this see Collins and Sterling, *Hellenism*.

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Mordecai's Dream in Interaction with the Dreams of Joseph and Daniel

Petr Chalupa

1 Introduction

The Greek versions of the Book of Esther (LXX and AT) are prefaced by the account of Mordecai's dream (A4–9) and concluded by its interpretation (F1–6).[1] The dream can be seen as a prophecy concerning all the narrated events that follow in the book. The interpretation of the dream at the end can be understood as fulfilment of the initial prophecy.

Prophetic dreams and their fulfilment are an important topic within the traditions of the Old Testament. Moreover, prophecy and its fulfilment can be significant for the structure of a text. The dream of Mordecai has many allegorical features that deserve attention, as well as the affinities between Mordecai's dream and the apocalyptic literature.

2 Prophetic Dreams and Their Fulfilment

It is not only prophetic dreams that we are interested in, but, simultaneously, and perhaps more generally, the scheme of prophecy and its fulfilment.

2.1 *Prophetic Dreams*

2.1.1 Traditions of Joseph, the Dreamer, and Daniel, the Interpreter

In the Book of Genesis, God shows Pharaoh, by way of two (allegorical) dreams, what he is about to do: καὶ εἶπεν Ιωσηφ τῷ Φαραω τὸ ἐνύπνιον Φαραω ἕν ἐστιν ὅσα ὁ θεὸς ποιεῖ ἔδειξεν τῷ Φαραω (Gen 41:25). In a similar way (not by a dream but by a vision) God reveals forthcoming events to Daniel: ἔτους πρώτου βασιλεύοντος Βαλτασαρ χώρας Βαβυλωνίας Δανιηλ ὅραμα εἶδε παρὰ κεφαλὴν ἐπὶ τῆς κοίτης αὐτοῦ … (Dan 7:1).

In both these cases there are prophetic dreams with visual elements, containing a message to the addressee.[2] In both cases the addressee is a foreign

1 The text of these additions in Greek (LXX) with the English translation (NRSV) is printed at the end of the chapter.

2 Husser, "Songe," 1446.

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ruler, the message has a negative character, and the interpreter of the dream is an Israelite.

With respect to literary dependence, it had been demonstrated that "the author of Daniel intentionally constructed his narrative in such a way to cause the reader understand Daniel as a new Joseph. (…) Joseph is a dreamer of dreams who gave signs of the future that came to pass (…) Daniel was a dreamer (…) paving the way for a new redemptive act of God".[3]

2.1.2 Interactions in the Book of Esther

Mordecai's dream at the beginning of both Greek versions of the Book of Esther seems to be inspired by the tradition of the prophetic dreams. There is an apparent link on the language level: in addition A, the phrase connecting the conjunction καί and the exclamatory particle ἰδού (A4.5.7) – introducing a description of what Mordecai saw in his dream – appears strikingly often. LXX introduces what Pharaoh saw in a dream (Gen 41) or what Nebuchadnezzar (Dan 2; 4) or Daniel saw (Dan 7) in the same way.[4]

Addition A introduces the reader into the world where a Jewish protagonist has a dream understood as announcing what God is about to do. For the Greek author of LXX, the notion of "preparing" is important. Two dragons are prepared to wrestle (A5) – it indicates the subsequent conflict between Aman and Mordecai (3:14). All the gentile nations are prepared to fight (A6). If the righteous people are prepared for destruction (A8), the reader may expect the destruction to occur, but, perhaps, the story will develop differently after all. The theological climax of "preparing" is Mordecai's considerations over what God decided that would happen. Everything that follows in the Book of Esther is prepared by God and the reader only learns how it will materialize.

Mordecai's dream announces a conflict and the reversal of negative expectations. The reader is placed in a waiting position, like Mordecai: will the dream come true (and, if so, how)? What does it mean? Everything is set up so that the following story can be read on the background of the dream. The reader has it "in his heart", just like Mordecai (A11: εἶχεν αὐτὸ ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ).[5]

In his dream, Mordecai saw, figuratively expressed, a hint of the events that would be told in the following text. Addition A thus emphasises that everything is guided by the divine providence.[6] At this point, a mention of God occurs for the first time in both Greek versions. In Mordecai's dream, the "righteous

3 Philpot, "Joseph," 695f.
4 Cavalier, *Esther*, 132.
5 Vialle, "Le songe" 113.
6 Kottsieper, "Zusätze," 138.

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nation" is crying out to God, who intends its deliverance (A8). The dream as a whole discloses God's plan (A11).[7]

2.2 *Fulfilment of the Prophetic Dream*

The Book of Esther ends with Mordecai's speech (F3–F6), in which the individual elements of the initial dream are subsequently interpreted as fulfilled.

2.2.1 Traditions Connected with Joseph and Daniel

When Joseph saw his brothers bowing before him, he remembered the dreams foretelling their behaviour (Gen 42:9; ἐμνήσθη Ιωσηφ τῶν ἐνυπνίων ὧν εἶδεν): the predicted homage of the brothers (Gen 37:5–7) was fulfilled. The author of the Book of Daniel speaks in a similar way at the point when Daniel's interpretation of king's dream came true: "the sentence was fulfilled against Nebuchadnezzar" – πάντα τελεσθήσεται ἐπὶ σέ Ναβουχοδονοσορ (Dan 4:33 LXX).

2.2.2 Interactions in the Book of Esther

The book of Esther discusses the salvation of Israel in a way similar to the stories of Joseph (cf. Gen 45:5f; 50:20).[8] Mordecai provides the events to follow with a supreme theological seal: "these things have come from God" (παρὰ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐγένετο ταῦτα; A11). Everything indicated in the initial dream was fulfilled: "I remember the dream that I had" (ἐμνήσθην γὰρ περὶ τοῦ ἐνυπνίου οὗ εἶδον, F2) The main passage of addition F (F3–F5) is meant as an authentic interpretation of the prophetic passage of addition A (A4–A10).[9] The Septuagint connects "the little spring which became a river" with "the light of the sun" and has all these phenomena refer metaphorically to Esther.

The second part of Mordecai's speech (F6–10) is a theological interpretation of the events ("the Lord has rescued us from all these evils"; cf. Gen 48:16). "Great signs and wonders" (τὰ σημεῖα καὶ τὰ τέρατα τὰ μεγάλα) represent a motif that plays a significant role in the salvation of Israel from Egypt (Deut 6:22; 7:19 LXX; 29:2). Some commentators draw attention to the connection between Exodus (actually Exod 1–12) and Esther. There are clear common elements: Israel's existence is threatened by another nation; the people cry out to God; salvation is associated with water; "the lowly were exalted and devoured those held in honor". In the story of exodus, Aaron's rod became a "dragon", which devoured the "dragons" of the Egyptian priests (Exod 7:9–11). The events in the book of Esther have a similar goal: the salvation of Israel. The phrase in F5

7 Seeman, "Dragon," 13.

8 Kottsieper, "Zusätze," 199.

9 See the table with emphasized parallels.

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"great signs and wonders, wonders that have never happened among the nations" (τὰ σημεῖα καὶ τὰ τέρατα τὰ μεγάλα ἃ οὐ γέγονεν ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν) indicates a global dimension of the threat and of the salvation of the Jewish people. By being able to "save his people" (Jer 38:7 LXX), God revealed himself as the Lord of history. The fulfilment of the prophecy is the right interpretation of the dream.[10]

2.3 *Prophecy and Fulfilment Shaping the Structure of the Text*

The presentation of a dream in connection with a narrative text may be, among other things, a symbolic scenario. It is located at the beginning of a text and it has an important role in its structure.[11] The content of the dream is recurrently quoted in the course of its decoding in the explication. Characteristically, the dream is presented at first in its entirety and in the interpretation part we can observe repetitions of its selected lemmata (see the table with the texts).

2.3.1 Traditions Connected with Joseph and Daniel

In Gen 40, the dreams of the butler and baker are first reported to Joseph in their entirety, whereupon their respective subunits are repeated together with their interpretation (Gen 40:10–11.12–13.17.18–19). In a similar manner, after the presentation of Pharaoh's dream in Gen 41, the content is partially cited and explained in verses 26–27.

Corresponding structural features appear in the interpretation of the dreams of Nebuchadnezzar in Dan 2 and 4. In the latter cases, the lemmata cited from the dream-report are introduced by such phrases as "whereas you saw" (Dan 2:41.43; 2:45; 4:17.20) and "whereas they commanded" (Dan 4:23).[12]

2.3.2 Interactions in the Book of Esther

The phrase "to see a dream" (ὁράω ἐνύπνιον) from A1 comes again in F2 as a link to the interpretation of the dream. The phrase functions as a verbal connection of the beginning of the Greek version (addition A) with its conclusion (addition F). The Greek additions A and F frame the book. They offer a theological interpretation of the Hebrew narrative – known as a text, in which there is no mention of either JHWH or God.

10 Kottsieper, "Zusätze," 200f.
11 Husser, "Songe," 1442.
12 Fishbane, "Exegesis," 447.

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These additions make Mordecai, in the manner of Joseph and Daniel, the recipient (addition A) and interpreter (addition F) of a revelatory vision that places divine agency at the forefront of the book's plot and transposes the story from the human to the divine sphere.[13]

3 Allegorical Dreams

Allegorical or symbolic dreams mediate a divine message – in the coded images – with no clear significance of the images.[14] Forthcoming events may be revealed through dreams to prominent biblical figures and foreign rulers, but the meaning of dreams can be recognised only by exceptional people, such as Joseph (Gen 40; 41) and Daniel (Dan 2; 4; 7).[15]

3.1 *Tradition Connected with Joseph*

All the matters of the initial dream are taken up in its interpretation. Joseph focuses on the three clusters of grapes seen by the butler in his dream, and on the three loaves of bread seen by the baker, and interprets these matters (Gen 40:10.12.16.18). Similarly, there are seven fat and seven lean cows, and seven good and seven blasted ears of corn, which are interpreted in Gen 41:26–27. A positive interpretation is given to the butler's dream, whereas the baker's dream receives a negative one. The interpretation is less dependent on the inherent symbolism of wine or bread – both are in fact positive – than on the context of the dream itself: the butler squeezes the grapes into the Pharaoh's goblet, whereas the baker's head is pecked by birds. Similarly, there is a fairly obvious correlation between the good cows and corn and the good years forecast, and conversely.[16]

3.2 *Interactions in the Book of Esther*

Mordecai's allegorical dream, related in A4–10, is decoded in the closing addition F1–6. The two dragons are Mordecai and Aman; "every nation" means the enemies of the Jews; "the righteous nation" represents the Jews; "a little spring" that grew into "a great river" is Esther. Both the dream itself and its

13 Seeman, "Dragon," 6.
14 Husser, "Songe," 1445.
15 Koller, *Esther*, 40–41.
16 Fishbane, "Exegesis," 450.

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decoding after the narrative, however, have their problems. The image of the dragons in combat derives from ancient Near Eastern creation myths in which a sea monster personifies chaos and poses a challenge to the creator, God (Isa 51:9–11; Ps 74:12–17). But the "dragons" in A4–10 are not aquatic and they fight not with God but with each other, which is quite atypical for the mentioned myths. It is possible that the dragons in Mordecai's dream represent an earlier form of this mythological motif.

A problem also remains in the decoding of addition F: not only the demonic opponent of God's reign, but also the hero, Mordecai, is represented as a mighty beast. In the interpretation of addition F it is also odd that both beasts – not only Aman, but also Mordecai – "roared terribly" as a signal for the enemies of the Jews (here described as "every nation", as it is not the case in the Hebrew story of Esther) to ready themselves to destroy the Jews (A5–6). Another element that one would surely expect in an adaptation of the ancient combat myth is strangely missing here: the destruction of the evil beast. Perhaps, it is to be assumed from the report that "the lowly were exalted and devoured those held in honor" (οἱ ταπεινοὶ ὑψώθησαν καὶ κατέφαγον τοὺς ἐνδόξους) (A10). Even then, however, the allusion is oddly indirect.[17]

4 Affinities to the Apocalyptic Literature

4.1 *Tradition Connected with Daniel*

As it is common in the apocalyptic literature, in the Book of Daniel "God in heaven" reveals mysteries of the latter days to King Nebuchadnezzar: "what will be in the latter days …" ἀλλ᾽ ἔστι θεὸς ἐν οὐρανῷ ἀνακαλύπτων μυστήρια ὃς ἐδήλωσε τῷ βασιλεῖ Ναβουχοδονοσορ ἃ δεῖ γενέσθαι ἐπ᾽ ἐσχάτων τῶν ἡμερῶν … (Dan 2:28). The connection of the phrase "to reveal mysteries" (ἀνακαλύπτω μυστήρια) with the phrase "in the latter days" (ἐπ᾽ ἐσχάτων τῶν ἡμερῶν) brings the reader into the world of apocalyptic literature. There are also other phenomena of the apocalyptic scenario in the Book of Daniel – roar of a multitude (φωνὴ θορύβου, Dan 10:6), anguish (θλῖψις, Dan 10:1) – that confirm its apocalyptic character.

17 Levenson, *Esther*, 39.

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4.2 *Interactions in the Book of Esther*

Addition A describes the dream of Mordecai. Though encrypted in coded imagery, Mordecai immediately perceives it as a vision of "what God had determined to do" (τί ὁ θεὸς βεβούλευται ποιῆσαι, A 11). After a calendar introduction, the author mentions a number of typically apocalyptic motifs in Mordecai's dream: earthquake, dragon, nation of the just, darkness and light, disorder over the whole earth, great roar, crying out to God, and flood (A 4–11).[18]

Mordecai is surely no "everyman". He is a seer like Daniel, whose interpretation is one of apocalyptic certitude. Having been graced with inerrant foreknowledge, he unstintingly plays out the role God had assigned him, ready to defend his actions and set forth the authorised version of the events.[19]

The dream of Mordecai (addition A) and its interpretation (addition F) recast a mundane palace intrigue in the apocalyptic terms of the book of Daniel, while the edicts (additions B and E) offer an opportunity to the Persian king to recognise the sovereignty of Israel's God – as do the foreign monarchs in Daniel and Ezra (Ezra 1:2–4; 6:6–12).[20]

5 Possible Historical Setting of the Additions A and F

The highly symbolic character of the dream itself and the element of predetermination represent something more than the prophecy-fulfilment scheme of classical biblical historiography. They have strong affinities to Jewish apocalyptic literature, in which combat with fearsome beasts and the miraculous rescue of the righteous minority after horrific afflictions are major themes (e.g. Daniel 7). Both the occurrence of Mordecai's premonitory dream and its interpretation recall particularly the Book of Daniel and suggest that addition A may have come from the same period as the apocalyptic visions in Daniel, viz. the second century BCE.[21] The bracketing of the older Hebrew parts of the book of Esther within the framework of Greek additions effects its recontextualisation in an apocalyptic mode. Daniel, originally a court sage, appears as an apocalyptic seer.[22] In a similar way, the court official Mordecai appears now as a mediator of apocalyptic knowledge.

18 Wahl, *Esther*, 49.
19 Seeman, "Dragon," 14.
20 Seeman, "Dragon," 6.
21 LaCocque, *Daniel*, 8–18.
22 Levenson, *Esther*, 39f.

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Mordecai's dream suggests, with the use of apocalyptic images, what will happen. The most expressive image is the battle of two dragons, other images include: a river growing from a little spring, representing the saving action of Esther, and light associated with the sun. The reader or listener can perceive from the very beginning that the dramatic events will ultimately turn out well for those who have been threatened. If we ask about the time, to which the text speaks, and about the possible bearers of this tradition, some group of supporters of the Hasmoneans may suggest itself. Talking about Esther, they would promote the success achieved by the Maccabees. The specific historical background of the "Hasmonean" recast could be the beginning of the reign of Salome Alexandra in the year 76 BCE: the opening dream underlines the role of the queen by the image of a spring that becomes a river.[23]

6 Conclusion

Mordecai's dream in the Greek addition A to the Book of Esther (A4–9) and its interpretation in addition F (F1–6) bracket the older Hebrew book into the structure of prophecy and fulfilment. This well-known biblical pattern plays significant role especially in the stories of Joseph and Daniel. The essential events appear as foreordained, at least to those who, like Joseph, Daniel and Mordecai, have the grace of revelation and the faith to persevere to the end, despite the allegorically coded revelation. The two Greek additions are thus early interpretations of the Hebrew story of Esther. They resolve the question that the Hebrew text leaves suggestively open: whence did such a gruesome story of genocide and anti-Semitism receive its happy ending? The additions give their answer in an unquestionably apocalyptic manner: the help came from God, to whom the Jewish people cried out (A8) and who was always fully in control of the events – even before Aman hatched his foul plot to obliterate the Jews (F1).[24]

23 Kottsieper, "Zusätze," 143.

24 Levenson, *Esther*, 39f.

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Additions in the Greek Text of Esther

A (beginning)		F (ending)	
[1] ἔτους δευτέρου βασιλεύοντος Ἀρταξέρξου τοῦ μεγάλου τῇ μιᾷ τοῦ Νισα **ἐνύπνιον εἶδεν Μαρδοχαῖος** [...]	(1) In the second year of the reign of the Artaxerxes the Great, on the first day of Nisan, Mordecai had a dream [...]	[1] καὶ εἶπεν **Μαρδοχαῖος** παρὰ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐγένετο ταῦτα [2] ἐμνήσθην γὰρ **περὶ τοῦ ἐνυπνίου οὗ εἶδον** περὶ τῶν λόγων τούτων οὐδὲ γὰρ παρῆλθεν ἀπ' αὐτῶν λόγος	(1) And Mordecai said, "These things have come from God; (2) for I remember the dream that I had concerning these matters, and none of them has failed to be fulfilled.
[4] καὶ τοῦτο αὐτοῦ τὸ ἐνύπνιον καὶ ἰδοὺ φωναὶ καὶ θόρυβος βρονταὶ καὶ σεισμός τάραχος ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς	(4) And this was his dream: Noises and confusion, thunders and earthquake, tumult on the earth!	[3] **ἡ μικρὰ πηγή ἣ ἐγένετο ποταμὸς καὶ ἦν φῶς καὶ ἥλιος καὶ ὕδωρ πολύ** Εσθηρ ἐστὶν ὁ ποταμός ἣν ἐγάμησεν ὁ βασιλεὺς καὶ ἐποίησεν βασίλισσαν	(3) There was the little spring that became a river, and there was light and sun and abundant water – the river is Esther, whom the king married and made queen.
[5] καὶ ἰδοὺ **δύο δράκοντες** μεγάλοι ἕτοιμοι προῆλθον ἀμφότεροι παλαίειν καὶ ἐγένετο αὐτῶν φωνὴ μεγάλη	(5) Then two great dragons came forward, both ready to fight, and they roared terribly.	[4] οἱ δὲ **δύο δράκοντες** ἐγώ εἰμι καὶ Αμαν	(4) The two dragons are Aman and myself.
[6] καὶ τῇ φωνῇ αὐτῶν **ἡτοιμάσθη πᾶν ἔθνος εἰς πόλεμον ὥστε πολεμῆσαι δικαίων ἔθνος**	(6) At their roaring every nation prepared for war, to fight against the righteous nation.	[5] **τὰ δὲ ἔθνη τὰ ἐπισυναχθέντα ἀπολέσαι τὸ ὄνομα τῶν Ιουδαίων**	(5) The nations are those that gathered to destroy the name of the Jews.
[7] καὶ ἰδοὺ ἡμέρα σκότους καὶ γνόφου θλῖψις καὶ στενοχωρία κάκωσις καὶ τάραχος μέγας ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς [8] καὶ ἐταράχθη δίκαιον πᾶν ἔθνος **φοβούμενοι τὰ ἑαυτῶν κακὰ** καὶ ἡτοιμάσθησαν ἀπολέσθαι	(7) It was a day of darkness and gloom, of tribulation and distress, affliction and great tumult on the earth! (8) And the whole righteous nation was troubled; they feared the evils that threatened them, and were ready to perish.	[6] τὸ δὲ ἔθνος τὸ ἐμόν οὗτός ἐστιν Ισραηλ οἱ **βοήσαντες πρὸς τὸν** θεὸν καὶ σωθέντες καὶ ἔσωσεν κύριος τὸν λαὸν αὐτοῦ καὶ **ἐρρύσατο κύριος ἡμᾶς ἐκ πάντων τῶν κακῶν τούτων** καὶ ἐποίησεν ὁ θεὸς τὰ σημεῖα καὶ τὰ τέρατα τὰ μεγάλα ἃ οὐ γέγονεν ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν	(6) And my nation, this is Israel, who cried out to God and was saved. The Lord has saved his people; the Lord has rescued us from all these evils; God has done great signs and wonders, wonders that happened among the nations."

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(*cont.*)

A (beginning)		F (ending)
[9] καὶ ἐβόησαν πρὸς τὸν θεόν ἀπὸ δὲ τῆς βοῆς αὐτῶν ἐγένετο ὡσανεὶ ἀπὸ μικρᾶς πηγῆς ποταμὸς μέγας ὕδωρ πολύ	(9) Then they cried out to God; and at their outcry, as though from a tiny spring, there came a great river, with abundant water;	
[10] φῶς καὶ ὁ ἥλιος ἀνέτειλεν καὶ οἱ ταπεινοὶ ὑψώθησαν καὶ κατέφαγον τοὺς ἐνδόξους	(10) light came, and the sun rose, and the lowly were exalted and devoured those held in honor.	
[11] καὶ διεγερθεὶς Μαρδοχαῖος ὁ ἑωρακὼς τὸ ἐνύπνιον τοῦτο καὶ τί ὁ θεὸς βεβούλευται ποιῆσαι εἶχεν αὐτὸ ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ καὶ ἐν παντὶ λόγῳ ἤθελεν ἐπιγνῶναι αὐτὸ ἕως τῆς νυκτός	(11) Mordecai saw in this dream what God had determined to do, and after he awoke he had it on his mind, seeking all day to understand it in every detail.	

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What Did Paul Hear in the Third Heaven?

The Second-Century Christian Debate on Paul's Mystical Vision and Its Consequences

Piotr Ashwin Siejkowski

1 Introduction

> 17 In the last days it will be, God declares,
> that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh,
> and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
> and your young men shall see visions,
> and your old men shall dream dreams.
> 18 Even upon my slaves, both men and women,
> in those days I will pour out my Spirit;
> and they shall prophesy.
> 19 And I will show portents in the heaven above
> and signs on the earth below …
>
> Acts 2:17–19+ NRSV

Wayne Meeks and John Fitzgerald have rightly noted:

> [T]he history of the reception of Paul's letters and of his story impresses upon us both the malleability of their meaning and the unending variety of ways that readers have injected their own identities into the process of interpretation.[1]

The authority of Paul and his theological legacy were at the centre of the second-century debate among various Christian groups and highlighted the importance of a text in self-understanding, but also contributing to the acquisition of ecclesiastical power.[2] If Paul's theology stimulated controversy, his mystical experience (a vision? dream?) hinted at in the *Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (12:1–4) provoked at least equal polemic in the early Church. What

1 Meeks and Fitzgerald, *Writings*, 692.

2 On Paul's authority among various second-century theologians see Pagels, *Gnostic Paul*, esp. pp. 1–12; Lindemann, *Paulus*; Pervo, *Making*; Vinzent, *Resurrection*; and the collection of papers in Bird and Dodson, *Paul.*

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was at stake was not a theory of mysticism, but rather the validation of a specific doctrine which leads to salvation. Apologists tried to enhance forcefully what they saw as the correct interpretation of Paul's mystical experience; consequently, in their view, the correct understanding of Paul's ecstasy led to the affirmation of the emerging orthodoxy and adherence to what they believed to be the true Apostolic legacy. At the same time, however, they aimed to reject erroneous interpretations of Paul's rapture which, in the light of their critique, were misleading opinions. Paul's rapture influenced a vigorous debate among various second-century Christian schools about the interpretation of the present, earthly existence in the light of the supernatural world.[3]

2 Synopsis of the Pauline Statement

The *Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, in the twelfth chapter, verses 1–4, records the following account of Paul's experience:

> It is necessary to boast. Although boasting is not beneficial, I will come to visions and revelations granted by the Lord. I know a man in Christ who, fourteen years ago – whether in the body, I do not know; or out of the body, I do not know (God knows) – was caught up to the third heaven. Indeed, I know that such a man – whether in the body or apart from the body, I do not know (God knows) – was caught up into paradise and heard inexpressible words that a human is not permitted to utter.[4]

The direct context of Paul's statement shows that the Apostle counters some claims of his adversaries, who also claimed mystical experience, if not direct knowledge of the divine.[5] It is evident that Paul and his rivals aimed to justify their teaching on the basis of their experience. We can assume that neither Paul nor his opponents in Corinth saw their teaching as a mere product of

3 Cf. Collins, *Cosmology*, 7.

4 The English translation follows Harris, 2 *Corinthians*, 828. For more analysis of the text, see Ibid., 827–846.

5 Scott J. Hafemann identifies Paul's opponents as 'Jews who were familiar with the Hellenistic world and espoused Sophist values and rhetorical techniques on the one hand, and relied on their own spiritual heritage as Jews on the other'; see Hafemann, "Corinthians," 177. More on Paul's adversaries in Sampley, "Paul," and Welborn, "Runaway".

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their theological speculation. On the contrary, Paul, as well as his antagonists, strongly believed that their 'Gospels' held God's ultimate authority.[6]

The central part of Paul's declaration, despite the author hiding himself behind 'an anonymous man' (ἄνθρωπος), contains an acknowledgement of an insight into the divine. This ecstasy, grammatically expressed by the passive voice of being 'caught up' (ἡρπάγη) to the 'third heaven' (τρίτου οὐρανοῦ), indicates Paul's ascent to 'paradise' (εἰς τὸν παράδεισον). In paradise 'the man' (ἄνθρωπος), again Paul, heard 'inexpressible words' (ἤκουσεν ἄρρητα ῥήματα)[7] that a human is not permitted to utter or which should not be disclosed to anyone, including his followers (ἃ οὐκ ἐξὸν ἀνθρώπῳ λαλῆσαι).[8] The Greek sentence leaves some ambiguity about Paul's exact intention as, for example, ἄρρητα may refer to the impossibility of expressing the content (i.e. the apophatic character of the revelation), while 'it is not permitted' (οὐκ ἐξὸν) may refer to the impermissibility of doing so. Therefore Paul's exact intention has to be left open. What is more

6 I accept Christopher R.A. Morray-Jones' opinion that in relation to 2 Cor 12 Paul's apostolic authority derives from his vision of Christ as the enthroned *kavod* in a *merkabah* vision; see his "Paradise Revisited".

7 The ambiguity of ἤκουσεν ἄρρητα ῥήματα offers a number of interpretations, where ἄρρητα may refer to: (1) impermissibility; (2) impermissibility and impossibility, and (3) impossibility and impermissibility; see the discussion in Harris, *2 Corinthians*, 843–844.

8 James R. Harrison, in his insightful interpretation of Paul's declaration, points out its paradoxical, even "comic elements"; see his "Quest", esp. pp. 52–54. He states: "Paul's use of the oxymoronic 'unutterable words' (2 Cor 12:4) for what he heard in Paradise captures the grandeur of the heavenly revelation and the elation it caused him (2 Cor 12:7a). But the apostle's impotence to articulate what he heard or saw leaves him defenceless in his apologia. It exposes him again to a familiar criticism of the Corinthians (2 Cor 10:10; 11:6): namely, that he does not have sufficient rhetorical skill to defend himself, either as the founding apostle of Corinth or as an apocalyptic seer. Jewish auditors, expecting the detailed description of Paradise characteristic of apocalyptic literature, would have dismissed him as a 'visionless visionary'. Ironically, even if Paul were capable of revealing what he heard and saw in the third heaven, God denies His apostle the right to do so (2 Cor 12:4b). Paul is not allowed to boast of his experience as an apocalyptic seer (2 Cor 12:5a, 6a, 7a), even though his vision was true. Seemingly, having silenced Paul's apologia before it had begun, God parades His weak apostle as a 'fool for Christ' on the cosmic stage – a spectacle for his opponents and the angels alike (2 Cor 12:7–8; cf. 1 Cor 4:9–10). Nonetheless, God's imposition of suffering results in the apostle humbly learning to boast in his weakness (2 Cor 12:5b, 6b, 7b, 9b). Above all, he experiences the total sufficiency of divine grace, because the power of Christ's resurrection is mediated in weakness (2 Cor 12:9–10)."

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certain is that, in Paul's view, as far as we can deduce, this sudden mystical rapture[9] authorised his unique apostolic authority.[10]

3 Reception of the Pauline Motif of Mystical Ascent among Various Second-Century Christian Schools of Thought

A number of apologists give evidence that Paul's declaration about his mystical ascent was known to and incorporated by those teachers who were labelled as 'heretics'. Apologists such as Irenaeus of Lyons, Clement of Alexandria, and Tertullian of Carthage present some important, but not unbiased, references to various Christian communities and their leaders, who adapted the Pauline motif into their theological frameworks. The chronology of that debate and the vigorous responses suggests that a number of earlier commentaries had discussed Paul's ascent and attracted some attention.[11] In addition to that direct polemical debate, a document known under its title the (Coptic) *Apocalypse of Paul* (V, 2)[12] confirms that at least some exegetes creatively elaborated the

9 As Harris observes: "This verb ἁρπάζω ('snatch away', 'catch up') points to a sudden rupture, as when believers who are alive at the parousia will be 'caught up' (ἁρπαγησόμεθα) in the clouds (1 Thess 4:17) or 'the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away' (ἥρπασεν), (Acts 8:39). The suddenness of Paul's ascent into heaven stands in contrast to the slow departure of Jesus into heaven at his ascension that is suggested by the imperfect ἀνεφέρετο in Luke 24.51, the expressive statement in Acts 1:10"; cf. Harris, *2 Corinthians*, 837.

10 According to some modern commentators (e.g. Hughes, *2 Corinthians*, 433; Klauck, "Himmelfahrt", 155), Paul's tripartite cosmology refers to the rabbinic distinction of three heavens (Harris, *2 Corinthians*, 840, n. 57, refers to the rabbinic exegesis of 1 Kings 8:27 and other sources: Deut 10:14; 2 Chron 2:6; 6–18; Neh 9:6), so the third heaven was the highest realm, signifying the immediate presence of God. In Hellenistic Judaism, particularly in apocalyptic literature, the usual number of heavens was seven; see, for example, *Testament Levi* (3:1); *2 Enoch* (8–22) and *Ascension of Isaiah* (9). For more on the importance of the motif of ascent to heaven in ancient Judaism, Christianity, Gnosticism, and other traditions, see Himmelfarb, "Practice". I am inclined to see Paul's reference to the tripartite structure of heaven in the passage under discussion as a possible outcome of his polemic against the local opposition in Corinth, where this cosmological model was accepted. Still, an important part of Paul's message to his followers in Corinth, at least, is about the total ban on discussion of the content of the revelation that was received.

11 For example, Vahan Havhanessian suggests that by the mid-second century various 'gnostic' theologians had assimilated Paul's theology so successfully that the apologists found it difficult to appeal to Paul's authority. See his *Third Corinthians*, 136–137. For other views, see a number of papers in Bird and Dodson, *Paul.*

12 The Coptic Apocalypse should not be confused with the New Testament Apocrypha, *Visio Pauli*, also known as the *Apocalypse of Paul*, which comes from the fourth century. For an

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motif from 2 Cor 12:1–4.[13] First, I wish briefly to introduce the evidence from the Apologists.

Irenaeus, in his *Against Heresies* (2.30.7), criticises his Christian adversaries labelled by him as "Valentinians" and their interpretation[14] of Paul's ascent. Irenaeus aims to discredit their concept of salvation:

> But since he [Paul – P.A-S] reports his ascent to the third heaven as something exalted and privileged it is impossible that these people are able to ascend above the seventh heaven since they are certainly not greater than the apostle …[15]

Irenaeus builds up his argument against the Valentinians, pointing out that Paul, no doubt the most trustworthy witness, only entered the third heaven and, if there were further spheres of the spiritual universe as the Valentinians claimed, Paul, in Irenaeus' view, would certainly be allowed to ascend.[16] In addition, as Valentinus' followers believed that the Demiurge only rules over the lower sphere, including the third heaven, Irenaeus concludes that Paul would hear only less relevant mysteries as they are communicated at the lower level of the spiritual universe. Irenaeus' polemical conclusion is quite logical: if the

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introduction and an English translation, see Duensing, "Apocalypse". Because my interest lies in the second-century literature, I shall not discuss this document.

13 Ismo Dunderberg does not include the *Apocalypse of Paul* into his list of eight texts classified as Valentinian; see his "School". However, other scholars, including William R. Murdock and George W. MacRae, see this document as representing the Valentinian tradition of exegesis of 2 Cor 12:1–4. See Robinson, *Apocalypse*, 49. I accept Michael Kaler's careful opinion as to the provenance of this document. Having reconsidered the arguments for and against the Valentinian provenance (e.g. the cosmology of the documents and ancient attestations). Kaler, *L'Apocalypse*, 158, states: "Overall, the case in favour of its Valentinianism is in my opinion stronger than the case against it, and this affiliation should therefore be retained, as being probable if not certain."

14 Although Irenaeus does not name his adversaries on this chapter, his polemic with their theology and theory of salvation suggest a Valentinian milieu. See more in Kaler, "Flora". According to Clement, the Valentinians believed that their apostolic succession begins with Paul through the mediation of a certain Theodas, who was supposedly a disciple of the Apostle Paul (*Strom.*, 7.106.4: 'Ωσαύτως δὲ καὶ Οὐαλεντῖνον Θεοδᾶ διακηκοέναι φέρουσιν γνώριμος δ' οὗτος γεγόνει Παύλου). We do not find any confirmation of that information in existing documents representing the Valentinian theology. However, in my view, it only confirms that for Valentinus and his followers Paul's authority and legacy were of significant importance. See also Markschies, *Valentinus*, 298–302.

15 This passage is preserved only in Latin: *Quoniam autem ille uelut magnum aliquid et praeclarum eam quae fuit usque ad tertium caelum adsumptionem enarrauit, not utique isti super septimum caelum ascendant: non enim sunt meliores Apostolo*. My translation.

16 *AH.*, 2.30.7.

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most holy Apostle was allowed only to enter the third heaven, still, under the rule of the Demiurge, there is no hope for the Valentinians to ascend higher, as "they are not better than the Apostle" (*non enim sunt meliores Apostolo*).[17] In Irenaeus' interpretation, Paul is not primarily "a visionary mystic", but rather a zealous defender of truth (*AH.*, 2.2.5; 3.14.2), "teacher of morality", and "organiser of the community/church".[18] Irenaeus' pedagogy aims to place less weight on Paul's mysticism, while it highlights more Paul's role as the herald of God's truth among the Gentiles (*AH.*, 5.12.5; 5.15.3). That reception of Paul's life and mission is not surprising as it served Irenaeus' theological and pastoral agendas.

Our second witness is Clement of Alexandria. In his *Paedagogus* (1.6.37.1) he suggests that some commentators assert knowledge of the secret message given to Paul during his mystical ascent. The direct context of Clement's polemic hints at some sort of assimilation of the Pauline motif into a theology of salvation, which has already experienced acquaintance with the divine realm:

> How then, if that truly is the promise [of what will happen – P.A-S] after our departure from here [*sc.* from this life – P.A-S], can they claim that they know "what no eye has seen nor has it come near to the mind of man", not having conceived that by the Spirit but having learnt from instruction "what the ear never heard" except *that only he* [i.e. Paul – P.A-S] have been caught up to the third heaven?
>
> πῶς δέ, εἰ ἐκείνη ὄντως ἐστὶν ἡ ἐπαγγελία μετὰ τὴν ἐνθένδε ἀπαλλαγήν, "ἣν ὀφθαλμὸς οὐκ εἶδεν οὐδὲ ἐπὶ νοῦν ἀνθρώπου [οὐκ] ἀνέβη", εἰδέναι φασὶν οὐ πνεύματι ἐννενοηκότες, ἀλλὰ ἐκ μαθήσεως παρειληφότες "ὃ οὖς οὐκ ἤκουσέν ποτε" ἢ μόνον ἐκεῖνο τὸ ἐν τρίτῳ ἁρπασθὲν οὐρανῷ.[19]

It is evident however, that Clement rejects the claim of those commentators. Although Clement himself does not provide us with the name of the Christian

17 *AH.*, 2.30.7. Some modern scholars such as William R. Murdock and George W. MacRae argue that Irenaeus' polemic against the Valentinian interpretation of Paul's ascent tried to counter-balance the preoccupation with speculation about Paul's ecstasy which was flourishing in some Christian circles (see Murdock and MacRae, *Apocalypse*, 49. More recently, Michael Kaler has suggested that Irenaeus' main rhetorical purpose was not only to renounce some heretical speculations, but also to challenge the more fundamental idea of Paul as the archetype of 'gnostic' experience and mysticism; see Kaler, "Flora," 52.

18 See Pervo, *Making*, 210.

19 I wish to thank Dr Carol Downer for her comments on my translation and her suggestions.

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group,[20] it is possible to deduce that, in his view, they were not a part of what Clement would call his Church. He was well aware of some speculation among other Christian schools as to the nature of the mystical revelation given to Paul. Again, Clement's opposition to the alternative exploration of Paul's ascent echoes a concern, rather common among the Apologists, about the authority of the correct interpretation of Paul's mystical rapture and, on a larger scale, of his (and other) Christian Scriptures. Unlike in the case of Irenaeus of Lyons, Clement's approach to his opponents, here the Valentinians, is much more complex, if not sympathetic.[21]

A similar confirmation of interest among some Christians in Paul's ascent comes from our third witness, Tertullian. In his *Prescription against Heretics* (24.5–6) Tertullian ridicules the possibility that his opponents may know about the secret revelation given to Paul:

> But even though Paul was caught up as far as the third heaven, and when brought into Paradise heard certain things there, yet these revelations cannot be thought to be such as would make him more qualified to teach another doctrine, because as a result of the very nature of those visions they could not be communicated to any human being. However, if the secret revelation was revealed and in consequence become known to someone, as in the case of some heresies which affirm that they follow that revelation, then either Paul is guilty of having betrayed his secret, or someone else must have been subsequently caught up into Paradise. To that person permission was given to speak out what Paul was not allowed to whisper.
>
> *Sed et si in tertium usque caelum ereptus Paulus et in paradisum delatus audiit quaedam illic, non possunt uideri fuisse quae illum in aliam doctrinam instructiorem praestarent, cum ita fuerit condicio eorum ut nulli hominum proderentur. Quod si ad alicuius conscientiam manauit nescio quid*

20 On the basis of the whole context of this section of Clement's work, I am inclined to accept that his polemic addresses Valentinian exegesis. Prof. Judith Kovacs, in her correspondence related to this intriguing passage, suggested that Clement of Alexandria in this whole Chapter 6 of *Paidagogus* 1 argues against Valentinian exegesis (and specifically their exegesis of 1 Cor 3:1–3, Hebrews 6:1–6, the gospel stories of Jesus' baptism, and several other Pauline texts). I endorse her view.

21 Because of Clement's ambiguous reception of Valentinian theology, when some themes were rejected (e.g. see Clement's critique of Valentinus' notion of 'faith' in *Strom*., 2.10.1.2), while others were silently accepted (Clement assimilated some exegetical and theological elements from this theologian and his school), his polemic with the Valentinian interpretation of Paul's rapture appeals rather on a margin of his record.

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> *illud et hoc se aliqua haeresis sequi affirmat aut Paulus secreti proditi reus est, aut et alius postea in paradisum ereptus debet ostendi cui permissum sit eloqui quae Paulo mutire non licuit.*[22]

Tertullian declares that, if any Christian claims to have such high knowledge, it proves either that Paul was disloyal to his own words, or that those individual Christians had similar mystical experiences, but unlike Paul, they were allowed to pass on the divine secrets to others. In the case of Tertullian's polemic, I am inclined to accept that Tertullian's passage made reference to the followers of Marcion. Earlier (23.1–11), Tertullian challenges the distinction between the authority of Paul and Peter, which was one of the elements of Marcion's doctrine.[23] Recently, Markus Vinzent has discussed Tertullian's comment in the context of Marcion's "radical Paulinisim".[24] Vinzent points out the significance of Paul's vision for Marcion's docetic Christology, as in that mystical ascent Paul encountered, in Marcion's interpretation the real, that is, un-incarnated Christ. This Christ was "purified" of any earthly element created by the creator of this world. Unlike the other apostles, Paul did not see the Saviour in the flesh (i.e. the "earthly" or "historical" Jesus), but is lifted up to the third heaven to receive the spiritual message that it is prohibited to disclose to those who are bound to the life in flesh. Paul is unique for Marcion and his mystical ascent testifies to that exclusive position. In consequence, only the followers of that Paul, the mystic, are true heirs of the apostolic legacy. Marcion's logic reaffirms his own choice of Paul and resolution to stand for the most authentic version of Christianity.

Finally in the current context, I wish to refer to the *Apocalypse of Paul* as independent evidence related to yet another elaboration of Paul's ascent mentioned in 2 Cor 12:1–4. But first, this document calls for a short introduction. The Coptic *Apocalypse of Paul* is the first of the four apocalypses[25] found in the fifth Codex in the collection known as the Nag Hammadi Library and is written on only six and a half pages.[26] Its literary genre places the document

22 *Praescrip*., 24:5–6; my translation.

23 The French edition of *De Praescriptione Haereticorum* notices parallels between Tertullian's polemic in 23.10 and his stance in *Adv. Marc*., IV.2 and 3, later in V.3; see Refoulé and De Labriolle, *Tertullien, Traité*, 119, n. 4.

24 See Vinzent, *Resurrection*, 117–118.

25 The others are the *First Revelation of James*, V, 3, the *Second Revelation of James*, V, 4, and the *Revelation of Adam*, V, 5.

26 The opening part of the document is lost as the codex is seriously damaged in the first section. There are also some minor lacunae at the top and bottom of each page, though

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within the tradition which depicted journeys towards the heavenly realm.[27] The document presents the exegesis of the crucial passage from *2 Corinthians*, without, however, direct reference to the source. The synopsis of Paul's ascent according to the *Apocalypse* can be summarised as follows. In a short prologue Paul, while going to Jerusalem,[28] encounters "a little boy" (ⲡⲕⲟⲩⲉⲓ ⲟⲩⲛⲙ) [18:6 and 12]. The boy asks the Apostle who he is, but, as we can clearly see from the narrative, the boy knows Paul's identity. That opening dialogue leads to a longer conversation and a forthcoming revelation. The child, identified by the text with the Spirit, will guide Paul through the complexity of the celestial realm until the final resting place in the tenth heaven. The same child/Spirit encouraged Paul to allow his "mind" (ⲛⲟⲩⲥ) to be awakened [18:22; 19:10b–11a]. By that act Paul was granted knowledge of "the hidden things" (ⲛⲉⲧϩⲙⲡ) [19:14] which are concealed in the depth of visible reality. Next, Paul was ordered to go to Jerusalem to meet the other Apostles. At the meeting the child/Spirit was speaking to Paul and suddenly:

> The Spirit caught him up ([ⲁⲩ] ⲧⲱⲣⲡ̄ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟⲩ) on high to the third heaven, and he passed beyond to the fourth [heaven].[29]

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in some of these cases the text can be reconstructed. The title appears at the beginning and at the end of the document; in the latter case it is complete, while in the former it is fragmentary. So far the Coptic text has no known parallel in any earlier Greek work known to us. However, it is agreed among scholars that the current late Coptic version is a translation of an earlier Greek document. If the original Greek manuscript was produced by Valentinian exegetes, it is plausible to locate the earliest Greek version of the Apocalypse within the chronological frame of the second century. I endorse Murdock's and MacRae's opinions (see their *Apocalypse*, 49) as the Apocalypse closely reflects the second-century debate on the Pauline motif and contains a number of references to other Jewish and Christian apocalyptic literature which flourished in this early period of Christian exegesis.

27 These ascensions were made by either Hebrew heroes (Enoch, Moses, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Levi, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Baruch, and Esdras) or Christian saints (Paul, John, and Mary). In other documents there were many reasons for that ascent, one of them being that the hero of the story was awarded with mystical ecstasy just before death, so that either that visionary was elevated by God (e.g. Enoch), or that experience was a part of his transformation from death to new life (e.g. the *Testament of Abraham*). The *Apocalypse of Paul* does not specify whether the ascent is related to a vision of heaven granted as a one-off mystical act, nor does it describe the ultimate experience.

28 As the precise name of the place is reconstructed, some scholars read "Jericho" (Böhlig and Kasser), while others argue for "Jerusalem"; for a discussion see Rosenstiehl and Kaler, *L'Apocalypse*, 177; I am convinced by the latter suggestion.

29 The *Apocalypse*, 19:22: [ⲙⲁⲩ ⲁⲩ]ⲧⲱⲣⲡ̄ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟⲩ ⲉϩⲣⲁⲓ ⲉⲡⲍⲓⲥⲉ· ⲟⲩⲁϩⲣⲁⲓ ⲉϯⲙⲉ [ϩⲱⲟⲙ] ⲧⲉ ⲙ̄ⲡⲉ· ⲁⲩⲱ ⲁⲩⲟⲩⲱ [ⲧⲃ̄ ⲉ] ϩⲣⲁⲓ ⲉϯⲙⲉϩⲩⲧⲟ ⲙ̄ [ⲡⲉ· ⲁⲩⲟⲩ]. English translation Murdock and MacRae.

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It is quite significant that the narrative leaves out any details of the third heaven and quickly moves to the next level of the heavenly realm.[30] By contrast with the minimal elaboration on the third heaven, the next section of the *Apocalypse* [19:20–21:22] receives greater attention. At the centre of the revelation in the fourth heaven we see the judgment scene [20:13–21:22], a motif well known within the apocalyptic genre.[31] The scene of the trial addresses one of the most significant ethical and theological subjects in late Antiquity: the belief in justice and order. On the basis of that belief, crimes committed during this life will be punished in the world to come.[32]

Next, in a short visit to the sixth heaven Paul gazed up at a great light shining [22:13–22:23]. Although Paul is aware of his special (elect) position while he looks down towards earthly reality, nonetheless, he is attracted to the heavens in front of him. The present level of spiritual reality is only an 'antechamber' of the next, higher heaven. Then the Spirit took Paul to the seventh heaven [22:23–23:28]. Here Paul encountered an old man sitting on a throne brighter than the sun. The old man depicted by the *Apocalypse of Paul* shares some features with the similar character known from, for example, the Book of Daniel (7:13) and 1 Enoch (46–47). In the *Apocalypse* the old man through conversation is becoming more hostile.[33] This unfriendly, mysterious character wishes to stop Paul, but having provided the man with the correct "sign" (ⲥⲏⲙⲓⲟⲛ), a

30 I accept the plausible argument, offered by Michael Kaler, that this surprising *lacuna* comes as the result of a direct polemic between Valentinian and non-Valentinian milieux which both recognised that Paul ascended as far as the third heaven, and therefore the *Apocalypse* does not develop any particular description of the realm. See more in Rosenstiehl and Kaler, *L'Apocalypse*, 144–145, 208–209.

31 The *Apocalypse*, 21:23. There Paul saw angels whipping a soul. Three witnesses of her (the soul is personified as feminine) sins present accusations against the soul. Then, as a result of her sins committed in the body, in (we can assume) her previous life, the soul was cast down to another body.

32 The motif of judgment continues in the fifth heaven [21:22–22:12]. There Paul saw the angels driving other souls on to judgment [21:22–22:10]. This shared focus on afterlife justice brings together the fourth and the fifth heavens. The next stage of the journey, through the sixth and seventh heavens, directs the attention towards the highest realms of the invisible and perfect world. It is possible to note that on entering the sixth heaven the Apostle Paul is crossing a specific boundary between less and more 'pure' spheres of the spiritual cosmology.

33 He exhibits some characteristics of an evil Demiurge as he tries to hinder Paul's ascent. The old man asks Paul about the destination of his journey. It is possible to hear in these questions an echo of the self-knowledge necessary to progress in salvation formulated by Theodotus and recorded by Clement of Alexandria, *Excerpta ex Theotodo*, 78.2: "But it is not only the washing that is liberating, but the knowledge of who we were, and what we have become, where we were or where we were placed, whither we hasten, from what we are redeemed, what birth is and what rebirth," trans. by Casey, *Excerpta*.

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sort of spiritual passport, Paul is allowed to enter the eighth heaven.[34] From now on, the ascent is very quick and it takes only a couple of lines to describe the rest of the journey. The eighth heaven, or the Ogdoad, is thus not the ultimate destiny, but only a place to rest before the last stage of the ascent.

It is obvious that the *Apocalypse*, in comparison with *2 Corinthians*, offers a much more complex architecture of the spiritual realm, comprising ten heavens; however, the term "paradise" is omitted, while the crucial role of guidance through that celestial journey is given to the child/Spirit. In conclusion, it is possible to see the whole complex scenario depicted in the *Apocalypse of Paul* as a reassurance of the positive hope that in ascent to the ultimate dwelling place, the soul of the Christian may encounter many troubles, but, like Paul before, is able to avoid the dangers and reach the realm of rest.

4 The Core Argument Used by the Representatives of the Great Church and Further Observations

Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Clement of Alexandria were convinced that the knowledge of the mysteries communicated to Paul was not revealed to his authentic disciples. The Apologists shared[35] a specific reading of Paul's account of his mystical experience from his *2 Corinthians*. This reading, unlike in the case of their opponents, did not leave any room for additional speculation about the content of mysterious "words" or "matters" which were revealed exclusively to the apostle. The Apologists put the crucial emphasis on the notice "it is not permitted" (οὐκ ἐξὸν). Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Clement expressed the strong conviction that Paul's request for silence about the revelation he received has to be obeyed literally. This is their principal argument against other commentators who already dared to speculate about the supposed content of the secret revelation.[36] The Apologists treated any attempt to describe the content of Paul's vision as a misleading and useless fabrication. This point was

34 The *Apocalypse*, 22:11–24:1. The Apocalypse of Paul concludes briefly in only a couple of lines of the Coptic text with Paul proceeding through the ninth heaven [24:30] and ending up in the tenth heaven [24:30], where it is Paul who greets his 'fellow spirits', who, despite being 'companions in the spirit', cannot be identified with the twelve Apostles of the *Apocalypse*, 24:8: ⲁⲓⲣⲁⲥⲡⲁⲍⲉ ⲛ̄ⲛⲁϣⲃⲏⲣ ⲙ̄ⲛ̄ⲇ̄: For further discussion of this term see Rosenstiehl and Kaler, *L'Apocalypse*, 277–278.

35 The issue of the interconnection and possible dependence among our four Apologists calls for another analysis, which will not be discussed in this paper.

36 Harrison, "Quest," 46, notes that "gnostic" (his expression) and later Christian apocalypses "used 2 Corinthians 12:2–4 as a springboard to further their own theological and ecclesiastical agenda".

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made as a part of their rhetorical rejection of other viewpoints, which did not treat that constraint as a valid theological appeal. Paul's vision and reluctance to recall its details was a part of the battle about the authority which allows or disallows further interpretations.

The Coptic *Apocalypse of Paul* did not take that imposed restriction as any sign of divergence from the divine revelation. The theological milieu which produced and preserved the *Apocalypse* showed different theological interests than those of their adversary from the emerging Great Church. Paul's rapture served here as a matrix of a spiritual ascent for mature/advanced Christians.

Although the *Apocalypse of Paul* offers more detail on the stages and visions of Paul's ecstasy, it does not refer to "the ineffable words" at all. In my view this is not a coincidental omission. For in the milieu where the *Apocalypse* was read and studied, it was not the "historical" Paul that attracted attention, but it was rather "Paul – the archetype of the true Christian" that played the pivotal role. Therefore the mystical experience of Paul known from this Epistle provided those anonymous Christians with a basic direction for their spiritual journey. At least the *Apocalypse of Paul*, while referring indirectly to Paul's ascent, does not impose any limits on the theological exploration of the mystical ascent.

In the closing part I wish to stress one important aspect of the debate around Paul's mystical ascent. It would be wrong to assume that there was a clear line of demarcation between the two camps: proto-orthodox Christians and their antagonists. Within each camp, there were further polemics as to the nature of Paul's experience: for instance, will a Christian make that sort of journey after death, or is this experience possible in the present life? The debate itself appears to be part of a larger controversy regarding the Pauline legacy during the second century. It is evident that Paul's authority was highly respected in some spheres of Christianity,[37] not only by, for example, the Apologists, but also by theologians and exegetes such as the milieu which preserved the *Apocalypse of Paul*. It is no coincidence that Tertullian claimed that Paul was the 'Apostle of heretics'[38] (*haereticorum apostolus*).

The controversy around Paul during the second century enhanced some trajectories of the emerging orthodoxy. In relation to the crucial statement from 2 Cor 12:1–4, as has been pointed out, the exegesis of Paul's document introduced a number of important theological issues relating to apostolic authority and the succession of apostolic teaching; for instance: "did Paul reveal what he heard in paradise?" and "if he did – which Christian groups represent Paul's authentic theological doctrine?" Consequently, what lay at the core of

37 However, Paul's authority and popularity among Jewish Christians were less evident.

38 *Adv. Marc.*, 3.5.4.

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that debate was the issue of those Christian teachers who had falsified Paul's theology on the basis of the revelation testified to in *2 Corinthians*. The debate included competing models of cosmology ("where is paradise?") and anthropology ("the value of the flesh in the light of mystical experience"). The debate highlighted the role of apophatic theology. The visible effort of the Apologists to preserve Paul's authentic legacy has to be seen in a larger context as a dramatic attempt to liberate Paul's theology from the "hands of heretics".

5 Conclusion

The vibrant debate about Paul's mystical vision attracted a great deal of attention in the inter-Christian polemic during the second century. The controversy was not primarily about the subject of Paul's vision, but the central issue was about the authority to comment on Paul's rapture, which in consequence led to some theological conclusions (e.g. resurrection, the future of the body, etc.). The Apologists tried to defend and regain Paul's motif, which had already become a part of the imaginative teaching in some Christian schools. That innovative approach attracted a great deal of attention among some more philosophically-oriented Christians. In the Apologists' view that sort of human speculation led to error and it was not authorised by Paul. At the heart of that debate lay an allegiance to a specific way of life with a crucial dilemma: how is one to live a Christian life in the present world in order to return to Heaven? Paul, either as a historical saint for some, or as an archetype of a spiritual/perfect Christian for others, was the best example of that life which brought spiritual liberation and new self-understanding in the light of the divine future already present *here and now*.

Interpretation of Paul's mystical experience served to various Christian groups as a matrix for their own spiritual and intellectual aspirations. Those groups aimed to attract new members and justify their claim as "authentic" heirs of Paul's teaching and life. Strong and ongoing reaction from Apologists confirms that the theological battle and exegetical struggle was far from over as growing apocryphal literature engaged Christian imagination not without success.

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The Double Interpretation of Eliphaz' Dream in Gregory the Great's *Morals on the Book of Job*

Dominik Opatrný

1 Introduction

"Whoever is bent to do the things which are of the world," states Gregory the Great at the beginning of his excursus on the triple sense of sleep in the Bible, "is, as it were, awake, but he, that seeking inward rest eschews the riot of this world, sleeps as it were."[1] This surprising encouragement to Christians to fall asleep is part of Gregory's interpretation of one of the most peculiar dreams in the Bible, Eliphaz' dream from the Book of Job. In this chapter, I am going to present Gregory's double interpretation of Eliphaz' dream connected to his idea of a triple meaning of the word 'sleep' in the Bible. It can mean 'death', 'apathy', but, according to Gregory, also 'true spiritual life'. We will see how Gregory deals with two crucial questions of the interpretation of the Book of Job: How to resolve the tension between the Proverbs emphasising God's retributive justice and Job putting it into question? And how to read the recommendations of Job's false friends as God's word? Gregory tried to reconcile those antagonisms through his allegorical interpretation, which enabled him to put opposing interpretations of the biblical text side by side. This way, one vision may be both an image of false teaching and God's genuine revelation.

Gregory's interpretation will be discussed in four steps. I will begin with remarks on the contemporary exegesis of Eliphaz' dream and present the questions faced by the exegetes. Secondly, I will present Gregory's first interpretation, which is highly critical of Eliphaz' claims. Thirdly, this interpretation will be compared to the second one, which is proposed in a positive tone and contains an excursus on the triple figurative meaning of sleep in the Bible. In the conclusion, I will offer some hermeneutical considerations proceeding from Gregory's interpretation.

1 *Moralia* 5,54 (CCL 143, 255): *Quisquis ea quae mundi sunt agere appetit quasis uigilat; quisquis uero internam quietem quaerens, huius mundi strepitum fugit, uelut obdormiscit.* If not stated otherwise, the English translations in this chapter are taken from Gregory the Great, *Morals on the Book of Job*, Vol. 1–3. Oxford: J.H. Parker, 1844–1850.

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2 Gregory's Commentary on the Book of Job

Pope Gregory the Great (cca. 540–604) wrote commentaries and homilies on the most difficult books of the Old Testament: Ezekiel, First Kings, Job, and, most notably, the Song of Songs. His intention was not to solve exegetical questions, but to make these "obscure" books "accessible" to those unable to read them with profit.[2]

Gregory achieved this by extensive allegorical interpretation, which included etymology, numerology, and even astrology. In general, Gregory distinguished three meanings of the Biblical text: the literal, the allegorical, and the moral.[3] The *literal sense* is the proper meaning of the words. If the words do not make sense, either because they are scandalous or the author simply used a metaphor, the *allegorical sense* is to be discovered. In this respect, Gregory differs from Thomas Aquinas, who considered metaphor to be part of the literal meaning.[4] Finally, the *moral sense* is a variant of allegoresis focused on practical life.

Gregory explained the Book of Job to his companions during his mission to Constantinople in 578–585. His friends then persuaded him to write down his comments, which Gregory did in 35 books finished and revised in the early years of his pontificate.[5] The work became the first line-by-line commentary on the Book of Job and despite its length, it remained highly popular and influential during the Middle Ages and was known under the name *Morals on the Book of Job* (*Moralia in Iob*).[6]

In his commentaries, Gregory does not reveal his sources, but teaches in his own authority. He never names Christian authors. In the Morals, we can find only a few anonymous quotations and allusions, mainly from Ambrose, Augustine, and John Cassian.[7] Ambrose, the bishop of Milan, wrote four books of *The Prayer of Job and David*. He evaluates the speech of Eliphaz negatively, but he does not explicate the dream itself.[8] Augustine left only some notes on the Book of Job, in which he attributes a positive sense to Eliphaz' words and the oracle (as far as it can be ascertained from the fragmentary remarks), but he does not comment on the vision itself.[9] Finally, John Cassian does not recall

2 Cf. DelCogliano, *Gregory*, 67.
3 For more detailed discussion, cf. Markus, *Gregory*, 45–47.
4 Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae I* q. 1 a. 10 ad 3.
5 Gregory worked on the commentary between the years 579 and 602; cf. Steinhauser, "Job," 35.
6 Cf. Straw, "Sin," 71.
7 Cf. Gillet, "Introduction," 83–84.
8 Cf. Ambrose, *De interpellatione Job et David*, 1,10 (PL 29,801).
9 Cf. Augustinus Aurelius, *Adnotationes in Iob*, 514.

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the scene either in *Institutions* or in *Conferences*. None of the authors develop the idea of the triple figurative meaning of sleep in the Bible in the above-mentioned books.

3 Exegetical Issues

Biblical dreams can be sorted into two groups. The first type may be called 'visionary' – these dreams are symbolic (allegorical) and usually require an interpretation. The second type may be called 'auditory' – such dreams contain a clearly expressed message.[10] Visionary dreams can be represented by those of the Joseph of the Old Testament (Gen 37), auditory dreams by those of the Joseph of the New Testament (Matt 1:20; 2:13).

The dream of Eliphaz in Job 4:12–17 is rather peculiar, as it is a sort of mixed type: it involves both vision and audition. In this respect it is close to prophetic visions:[11]

> [12] Now a word came stealing to me,
> my ear received the whisper of it.
> [13] Amid thoughts from visions of the night,
> when deep sleep falls on mortals,
> [14] dread came upon me, and trembling,
> which made all my bones shake.
> [15] A spirit glided past my face;
> the hair of my flesh bristled.
> [16] It stood still,
> but I could not discern its appearance.
> A form was before my eyes;
> there was silence, then I heard a voice:
> [17] 'Can mortals be righteous before God?
> Can human beings be pure before their Maker?'
>
> Job 4:12–17 NRSV

The pericope may be divided into two parts, one of them describing a terrifying vision together with Eliphaz' bodily reaction to it (v. 12–16), the other

10 Cf. Husser, *Dreams*, 99–103.

11 Cf. e.g. Amos 7:7–9. For the possible allusion to prophetic visions in Eliphaz' dream, cf. Hartley, *Job*, 111. MacKenzie and Murphy, "Job," 472, also admit the allusion of prophetic texts, but they consider it only as a parody.

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containing a divine oracle (v. 17 or more; see below). The whole dream is situated close to the beginning of Eliphaz' first speech, after the opening address to Job and the proverb about a lion. The oracle of the dream works as a motto; it is a programmatic statement of Eliphaz' starting position: "Even the most innocent of humans, like Job, must expect to suffer deservedly on occasion."[12] Eliphaz uses the vision to prove that his message does not stem from pure human experience, but also from revelation. He "claims a certain degree of inspiration", as did other authors of wisdom literature (cf. Daniel 2).[13]

The comparison of translations and commentaries reveals diverse opinions on the structure and meaning of the text. The first difficulty concerns the nature of the event that is described: was it really a dream, or rather a vigilant vision? In other words, was Eliphaz sleeping, awake, or in some other state of mind during the event?

There are three basic possibilities as to how to interpret the words "when deep sleep falls on mortals" (v. 13b). First, it could be merely an expression specifying the time of the vision: Eliphaz received the revelation *when others were sleeping*. In this sense, nothing is stated about the mental state of Eliphaz, even though it could be assumed that he was awake, thinking about his visions (cf. v. 13a). The Latin version is even more open to this interpretation, speaking about what happened "in the horror of night vision" while others slept: *in horrore visionis nocturenae, quando solet sopor occupare homines*.[14]

Second, the deep sleep could be used to describe Eliphaz' state of mind: when mortals, including Eliphaz, slept, etc. Only in this sense would the vision really be a dream.

Finally, the word *tardemah* (תַּרְדֵּמָה) may also be translated as "trance" rather than "deep sleep". Then it would specify Eliphaz' mental state, neither asleep or waking, but "an extraordinary supernatural mood of anaesthesia, in which a person feels and perceives nothing (as in Gen 2:21; 1 Sam 26:12; Isa 29:10 or else is sensitised to experiencing a divine revelation."[15] This would connect the

12 Clines, *Job 1–20*, xl. Hartley, *Job*, 111, summarises Eliphaz' position: "no human or heavenly creature is just in relationship to God." From these encouragements to humbly seek God's mercy (first speech) Eliphaz proceeds to rebuff Job's claims to wisdom (second speech) and finally to accusations of committing social sins; cf. Habel, *Job*, 30–31.

13 Husser, *Dreams*, 166.

14 Thus Thomas Aquinas, *Super Iob*, cap. 4: *et ideo ut ostendat hanc revelationem non dormienti sed vigilanti factam esse, subiungit imago coram oculis meis, per quod significat se hoc vidisse cum oculis per vigiliam apertis, quod etiam supra significavit cum diceret quando sopor solet occupare homines, ubi innuit se sopore occupatum non fuisse.*

15 Clines, *Job 1–20*, 129; but he does not agree with this interpretation, adding "that there is nothing in the term itself that requires such a significance". Similarly Fohrer, *Hiob*, 142.

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text to the patriarchal visions, especially the vision during the sacrifice sealing God's covenant with Abraham (Gen 15:12).[16]

In fact, however, modern commentators are apparently reluctant to choose one of these meanings, they rather exclude one of them. So Clines assumes "that the 'deep sleep' (תרדמה) Eliphaz speaks of here is his own sleep or state of trance in which he received his vision."[17] So he combines the second and third possibilities. Szczygiel, however, says that

> the 'deep sleep', *tardemah* (33:15; Gen 2:21) is stated about humans in general. Through that, ecstatic sleep, intended by G[reek translation], is excluded. It serves here only to specify the time as deep night and to state that Eliphaz had the experience (…) in connection to his sleep, in a dream.[18]

Therefore he combines the first and second possibilities, i.e. the specification of the time and normal sleep. Finally, Fohrer considers that "deep sleep" both describes the state of Eliphaz' mind (not sleep, but insensibility caused by God's presence) and specifies the time, thus combining the first and third possible senses.

More important for the reader is the second question: Where does the vision come from? Does it come from God, from the devil, or is it just Eliphaz' fabrication? Traditionally, the story has been read as a genuine divine revelation. Clement of Rome quotes the passage in 1 Clem 39.3 (Funk 56,21) to support his own argumentation. Thomas Aquinas also considered the event to be a genuine divine revelation, albeit misused by Eliphaz. Some modern commentators, e.g. Paul Szczygiel, Georg Fohrer, and Jean-Marie Husser, continue in this line of interpretation.[19] Thus it is emphasised that the word *temunah*

16 The connection to Abraham's vision in Gen 15:12 is preferred by Habel, *Job*, 127. According to Hartley, *Job*, "tardemah" can mean "a deep natural sleep (e.g. Jon 1:5–6; Prov 19:15), but more often it signifies a stupor that God causes to fall on a person, blocking out all other perceptions, in order that the person may be completely receptive to the divine word".

17 Clines, *Job 1–20*, 129.

18 Szczygiel, *Job*, 52, understands *tardema* as an indication both of time and of Eliphaz' state: "'Tiefer Schlaf' tardēmāh (33,15; Gn 2,21) wird von den Menschen im allgemeinen ausgesagt. Dadurch ist ekstatischer Schlaf, wie G es will, ausgeschlossen. Er dient hier nur zur Zeitbestimmung für tiefe Nacht und zur Angabe, dass Eliphas das Erlebnis (V. 14 bis 16) in Verbindung mit seinem Schlafe, im Traume hatte."

19 Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Super Iob*, cap. 4: *Quia asseruerat Eliphaz quod adversitates in hoc mundo non adveniunt alicui nisi propter eius peccatum, volens ex hoc arguere Iob et eius familiam fuisse peccatis subiectam, cuius contrarium videbatur ex his quae manifeste in Iob*

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(תְּמוּנָה – 'form') is used only for God and that the bodily reactions should be considered to be the result of encountering the Holy One.[20]

Nevertheless, the visions and dreams can be misleading (Jer 23:25–28; Sir 34:1–7, Qoh 5:2). The night and the terror spread by the vision may suggest that the author of the book intended the vision to appear at least suspicious, if not demonic. The evaluation of Norman C. Habel is highly critical:

> The poet's bizarre collage of disparate allusions borders on a parody of traditional modes of revelation (see details under Message). Probable allusions to various revelatory traditions are deliberately brought into a clever juxtaposition of unlikely associations. An anonymous word steals in, a vague sound is snatched, a nightmare intrudes on a deep sleep, a terror confronts the sleeper, a whirlwind makes him shiver, a veiled apparition is seen, something unknown stands before him, an unidentified form meets him, and finally a voice is heard after an ominous hush. The oracle received has no identified origin and is delivered by no known messenger. Eliphaz' message is a faint sound uttered by a fleeting specter.[21]

At any rate, even if we read the description of the dream with such a suspicion, there is nothing unorthodox in the concluding oracle: "Can mortals be righteous before God? Can human beings be pure before their Maker?" (v. 17).[22] However, here emerges another puzzle: it is not certain whether the oracle

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et in eius familia apparuerant, vult ostendere quod nec Iob nec eius familia fuerit a peccato immunis. Et quia, propter auctoritatem Iob et famam ipsius, eius verbum invalidum videbatur, recurrit ad auctoritatem maiorem ostendens ea quae propositurus est se ex revelatione didicisse (…) *et Eliphaz hic vel vere vel ficte loquitur dicens porro ad me dictum est verbum absconditum* (…) *Per hoc igitur quod dicit vocem quasi aurae lenis audivi, consolationem quandam sedantem pavorem praeteritum demonstrat, ut per hoc visio demonstretur esse a spiritu bono non a spiritu malo*. Cf. Szczygiel, *Job*, 52: "Der hl. Thomas sagt von ihr, daß sie entweder wirklich oder erdichtet war. In der neueren Zeit treten noch Gietmann (Parzival, Faust, Job s. 577) und Hontheim dafür ein, daß sie vom Teufel komme. Dafür liegt aber kein Grund vor; wie schon der hl. Thomas und Pineda hervorheben, enthält die Vision an sich Richtiges; für die falsche Anwendung ist Eliphas verantwortlich." Fohrer, *Hiob*, 142, n. 19: "Jedoch ist jede Zurückführung der Erscheinung auf den Satan (vgl. Dazu G. Gietmann: Klassische Dichter und Erzählungen. 1/2. 1887, S. 556ff.; Hontheim) völlig auszuschließen"; cf. Husser, *Dreams*, 163.

20 Cf. Fohrer, *Hiob*, 143.

21 Habel, *Job*, 121–122. Similarly MacKenzie and Murphy, "Job," 471–472.

22 Therefore the words of Eliphaz (Job 4:16–18) are quoted as an authority in 1 Clem. 39.3 (Funk 56,21).

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ends here and the rest of the chapter is Eliphaz' comment,[23] or whether the rest of the chapter belongs to the oracle as well.[24]

On top of all these questions, the most important one for the reader is: How can a believer read such a dream with profit? How can it be used in faith instruction? Or, more generally, how is one to read the nine chapters of the Book of Job containing the friends' discourses with profit? Is it a piece of literature similar to C.S. Lewis' *The Screwtape Letters*? As will be shown, none of these questions is new and they all influence Gregory's interpretation.

4 The First Interpretation – Eliphaz as a Heretic

Gregory also perceives the tension between the orthodoxy of some sayings of Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar and their final condemnation by God. Although not challenging God's final judgment, he cannot resist admiring the wisdom in the friends' speeches:

> And although, as far as concerns human judgments, his friends might be believed to have said in their words many things better than himself, yet Truth bringing forth another rule from the secret place, says: "Ye have not spoken before Me the thing that is right, as My servant Job".[25]

It is not the teaching of the three friends, but their attacks on Job resulting in God's final decision, that leads Gregory to call Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar "an express image of heretics", who, "while acting as [Job's] counsellors, at the same time they inveigh against him."[26] For this reason, Gregory also interprets Eliphaz' dream at first in an utterly negative way as a description of strategy used by heretics.

As he states, Job's friends bear "the semblance of heretics":[27] The night vision means that they cannot be certain about what they say.[28] The *deep sleep*,

23 So e.g. Czech Ecumenical Translation, God's Word Translation, Holman Christian Standard Bible, Hoffnung für Alle.

24 So e.g. New Revised Standard Version, Jerusalem Bible. The long version of the oracle is also preferred by Habel, *Job*, 115.

25 *Moralia* 35,10 (CCL143B, 1780): *Et quidem quantum ad humana iudicia, in uerbis suis amici eius multa illo rectius dixisse credentur; sed ueritas aliam ex occulto regulam proferens, ait: "Non estis locuti coram me rectum, sicut seruus meus Iob."*

26 *Maralia*, Praefatio 15 (CCL 143, 20): *haereticorum figuram exprimunt, qui sub specie consulendi agunt negotium seducendi.*

27 *Moralia* 5,49 (CCL 143, 238): *haereticorum speciem tenent.*

28 Cf. *Moralia* 5,46 (CCL 143, 250).

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taken literally, is mentioned out of pride: while others are sleeping, the heretics claim to receive the heavenly truth.[29] Thus the word *tardemah*/*stupor* is taken here in its first above-mentioned sense, as a mere specification of time. *Fear* means that the heretics pretend to be themselves in fear of the noble things they say.[30] They, like Eliphaz, talk about a *passing spirit*, which represents "incomprehensible mysteries".[31] They talk about the voice as if it were a *light breath*, "for they never teach the things which God reveals openly, but such as are breathed into their ears in a secret manner".[32] Generally speaking, Gregory's attitude to Eliphaz' words is a priori negative. His evaluation of the speech is not based upon any analysis of the text, but upon the assumption of Eliphaz' ill will.

Nevertheless, Gregory can use this interpretation only till the verse 16. The next verse contains the oracle and can hardly be interpreted as heterodox. In fact, Gregory considers it to contain "things both true and lofty" and therefore he has to change his interpretative strategy.[33] He goes back and interprets the vision from verse 12 again, this time in a completely positive way. How could he explain such a radical change? Gregory claims that the three counsellors could not be such villains if they were friends of such a righteous man.[34] Similarly, heretics sometimes learn something during their disputes with true Christians, so that they can repeat it without having a genuine experience of God.[35] In other words, the words of heretics can contain a "second-hand" truth, but still truth. Nevertheless, Gregory is not completely consistent in this explanation, since he later lets Eliphaz contemplate God.[36] After all, this is not the first time that Gregory has interpreted one place in two completely contradictory ways. Some pages earlier, he was able to interpret the lion, lioness, and cubs literally as Job, his wife, and their children, but allegorically as Satan, Babylon, and the

29 Cf. *Moralia* 5,46 (CCL 143, 250).

30 Cf. *Moralia* 5,47 (CCL 143, 250).

31 *Moralia* 5,48 (CCL 143, 251): *Vt incomprehensibilia se cognouisse indicent …*

32 *Moralia* 5,49 (CCL 143, 251): *Non enim ea docent quae Deus publice loquitur sed quae eorum auri quasi latenter aspirantur.*

33 *Moralia* 5,49 (CCL 143, 251): *Nonnumquam uero haeretici uera quaedam et sublimia loquuntur.*

34 *Moralia* 5,49 (CCL 143, 251): *Sed quia amici beati Iob tanti uiri amici non essent, nisi manifeste aliquid ex ueritate didicissent, qui quamuis in sententiis correptionis errant, in ueritatis tamen cognitione non in toto titubant.*

35 *Moralia* 35,10 (CCL 143B, 1780).

36 Cf. *Moralia* 5,67 (CCL 143, 266): *Quid ergo Eliphaz raptus in contemplatione cognouit nisi quod iustificari homo Dei comparatione no possit?*

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reprobate (not to mention the fact that in other places, a lion can signify God and a lioness the Church).[37]

5 The Second Interpretation – Eliphaz as a Model of Contemplation

In the second turn of the interpretation, Gregory simply suspends his allegorical interpretation of Job's friends as heretics for a moment and assumes good will on the part of Eliphaz. The "stealing word", in Latin "hidden word" (*uerbum absconditum*), is the Logos hidden by God since time began.[38] The "veins of its whisper" (so Vulgate) represent different modes of God's communication to men.[39] "Whispering" is God's soft speech to man, because we could not bear his speech now.[40] "Thoughts (Vulgate: horrors) from the vision of the night" are the fear instilled by the contact with God's holiness in the darkness of worldly life.[41]

This does not mean, however, that he suspends his allegorical approach in general. Quite the contrary. Gregory focuses especially on the motif of sleep and finds three figurative meanings of this word in the Bible.[42] Marking them as figurative should cover both metaphorical and allegorical interpretation in our terminology.

Gregory states that the word "sleep" could express the death of the flesh, apathy, and, surprisingly, also the quiet life of a true Christian.

In its first metaphorical sense, the word "sleep" can mean the death of the flesh. Gregory does not develop this idea any further; he just offers Paul's encouragement to the Thessalonians an example: "But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about those who have died (…) God will bring with him those who have died" (1 Thess 4:13–14).[43]

In its second metaphorical sense, the word "sleep" can mean "the numbness of indifference"[44] or apathy. As in the previous case, Gregory only provides a few examples, again from Paul: "it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep" (Rom 13:11) and "Awake, ye righteous, and sin not" (1 Cor 15:34 – Vulgate).

37 Cf. *Moralia* 5,26.38.41–42 (CCL 143, 236–247).
38 Cf. *Moralia* 5,50 (CCL 143, 252–253).
39 Cf. *Moralia* 5,51 (CCL 143, 253).
40 Cf. *Moralia* 5,52 (CCL 143, 253–254).
41 Cf. *Moralia* 5,53 (CCL 143, 254–255).
42 Cf. *Moralia* 5,54 (CCL 143, 255–256).
43 Here The New Revised Standard Version already interprets the metaphor, but both the original Greek and Latin Vulgate read "sleep" (κοιμώμενοι – *dormientes*).
44 Tr. from DelCogliano, *Gregory*, 222.

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Later on, he comes back to these texts in his interpretation of Job's lamentation "When I go to sleep, I say, When shall I arise? and again I shall look for the evening" (Job 7:4). This time, he interprets sleep in two ways.[45] The first one is inaction, as when during activities we long for rest and vice versa. The second is sin, as when we sin, we strive to rise and after rising we look forward to the fulfilment of our life.[46]

In the case of Eliphaz' dream, however, the word "sleep" is used in its third sense, which stands almost in opposition to the second one: the sleep is a state of the soul, who closes her outer senses and is prepared to contemplate God. In contrast to the previous two meanings, this one is allegorical rather than metaphorical, but as already stated above, Gregory does not distinguish between the two.

Gregory quotes three Scripture passages elucidating this sense of the word. The first one is the Song of Songs 5:2: "I sleep but my heart is awake." He explains it as two aspects of the "holy mind". The first aspect requires the soul to close her senses, the second one to be attentive to God. This second aspect can be described as waking up, living a virtuous life, or as leaning toward Christ.

Sleep as an expression of a quiet life can also be connected to the story of the first sin, even though no sleep is mentioned there. Humankind was created to contemplate God, but when the seducer led the first couple astray and opened their eyes of concupiscence, they lost the power to comprehend the inner sense.[47] To sleep therefore means to close these eyes of concupiscence in order to become attentive to God. Therefore Gregory later paraphrases the verse from the Song of Songs: "As if [the bride] were saying: 'while I give my exterior senses rest from the worries of this life, I have a more lively comprehension of interior realities since my mind is free'."[48]

The last passage elucidating this allegorical meaning of the word "sleep" is the story of Jacob's dream. His sleep on a journey works as a metaphor for a human being resting from his desires during his earthly pilgrimage. Nevertheless, a mere withdrawal from the active life alone could be dangerous, since people, "in proportion as they rest more secure from outward actions, the more amply they are gathering in themselves from idleness an uproar of

45 Cf. *Moralia* 8,19 (CCL 143, 395–396).

46 Cf. *Moralia* 8,20 (CCL 143, 396–397).

47 Cf. Poštová, "Hřích".

48 *Moralia* 23,38 (CCL 143B, 1173): *Hinc est quod sponsa in Canticis canticorum sponsi uocem quasi per somnium audierat quae dicebat: Ego dormio et cor meum uigilat.* Tr. from DelCogliano, *Gregory*, 222.

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unclean thoughts."[49] One has to "lay his head upon a stone", which means "to cleave to Christ in mind". In this way, one starts a new life exercising virtue.

It is not the aim of this chapter to present Gregory's whole aretology. Nevertheless, it seems appropriate to remark that according to Gregory, humans are capable only of evil deeds by their power, whereas good deeds are the fruit of God's grace and human cooperation with it.[50] Therefore, all virtues stem from faith and are received from the Holy Spirit by grace. The practice of virtues starts only when human beings open themselves to God.[51]

To conclude with Eliphaz, Gregory perceives his dream as a great occasion for evolving an extensive discourse on the senses of sleep in the Bible. He is most interested in the third, allegorical sense, which describes man's rest from the business of the world. It is precisely during such a rest that a man can receive God's revelation, as Eliphaz did. The Pope returns to this thought briefly on two other places. In both of them, the above-mentioned verse from the Song of Songs is recalled.

The first place can still be found in *Morals*, in the interpretation of Elihu's discourse on God's usage of dreams: "God speaks (…) in a dream, in a vision of the night" (Job 33:14–15). In the interpretation, Gregory cites his favourite verse from the Song of Songs, but he also relates sleep to the three stages of Christian life represented by the life of Moses. The first stage involves the *vita activa* represented by Moses' career in Egypt. The second stage involves the *vita contemplativa*, the withdrawal from the world into a monastery, represented by Moses' flight into the wilderness. The last stage is the situation of a *mystic* living actively in the world. It is represented by Moses among the Israelites, but often ascending the mountain to accept God's law. Similarly, "holy men, who are obliged by the necessity of their employments to engage in outward pursuits, are ever studiously betaking themselves to the secrets of their hearts."[52] This path corresponds to the life of an ideal bishop and also to the biography of Gregory himself: he started as a prefect of Rome (first stage – *vita activa*), continued in his monastic life (second stage – *vita contemplativa*) in order to return to politics and become the Pope's ambassador and subsequently the Pope himself (third stage – "blended way of life").[53]

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49 *Moralia* 5,55 (CCL 143, 257): *ut quanto securius ab externis actionibus cessant, tanto latius immundae in se cogitationis strepitum per otium congerant*.

50 Cf. Poštová, "Milost," 268.

51 Cf. Bejczy, *Virtues*, 32; for further discussion of Gregory's aretology, Humpries, *Pneumatology*, 164–168; Straw, *Gregory*, 120 and 124.

52 *Moralia* 23,38 (CCL 143B, 1172): *Vnde et sancti uiri qui exterioribus ministeriis deseruire officii necessitate coguntur, studiose semper ad cordis secreta refugiunt*.

53 Cf. Müller, "Gregory," 103.

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The second place where Gregory recalls his triple figurative meaning of sleep is in his sermons on Ezekiel. Here, Gregory compares the sweet contemplative life with the contemptible corporeal life. The Bride, who represents the Church, "sleeps with a heart that is awake because on account of her interior progress in contemplation she is undisturbed by disturbing exterior works".[54]

In this way, Gregory is able to combine the opposites into one unit: sleep can mean both spiritual apathy and spiritual progress; contemplation is compatible with earthly duties; heretics may tell the truth and Job's friends speak better than Job himself.

6 Hermeneutical Considerations

A dream incorporated into a piece of literature is a world unto itself. Nevertheless, as our "real" dreams are connected to our experience, the literary dreams are connected to the surrounding story. As we have seen, the interaction of Eliphaz' dream with its context is highly complex: the dream is presented as God's revelation, but it is presented by a character who is rebuked by God at the end.

In Gregory's commentary, this complex interaction leads to a double interpretation. The first one is negative, because the whole story is told by the wicked Eliphaz. The second one is positive, since it contains God's revelation. In order to reinterpret one text in this way, Gregory must change his position in several areas during the second rendering. Most notably, he interprets sleep allegorically, which opens him up to a wide area of positive meanings of Eliphaz' vision.

The analysis of Gregory's interpretative strategy leads us to some considerations about the interaction between the motif of dreams and sleep in the biblical text and its patristic commentary. We will start from general observations and continue to more specific details.

In the interpretation of an ancient text, e.g. the Bible, a certain degree of uncertainty is unavoidable. Today, a commentator is expected to formulate his own theory and his own solution of the issues and find the writer's intention as the proper meaning of the text. Augustine was able to tolerate more meanings of a single biblical text. Gregory could tolerate them even when they stood in contradiction of one another:

54 Gregorius Magnus, *Homiliae in Hiezechihelem prophaetam* 2,2,13 (CCL 142, 234): *Vigilanti etenim corde dormit, quia per hoc quod interius contemplando proficit, ab inquieto foris opere quiescit*. Translation from DelCogliano, *Gregory*, 222.

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> He can be, and is, inconsistent, and never acknowledges changing his mind. For Gregory, texts are suggestive, inclusive, and open-ended. Preachers, being inspired by the Holy Spirit, are free to draw whatever moral lessons they can from the text, provided, of course, that they sound right to God's ears.[55]

In the case of Eliphaz' dream, Gregory gives two mutually exclusive interpretations – it is not possible to classify one as literal and the other as allegorical, they both combine both approaches. Gregory ascribes bad intentions to Eliphaz up to the point where he cannot go any further, and then he turns the tables, assuming good intentions. The explanation of this turn is quite weak, but Gregory does not seem to worry too much about it. The positive interpretation gives him the opportunity to develop his idea of three biblical senses of the word "sleep".

This interpretation of Eliphaz' sleep is not completely random, since Gregory uses other biblical passages containing the same word (only implicitly in one case) to ascertain the meaning of the difficult place, which was a popular interpretative technique throughout the whole history of reading and explicating the Bible. Gregory illustrates the triple meaning of the word "sleep" in the Bible by several passages. In some of them, sleep is used as a metaphor (death, apathy), and therefore can be understood only figuratively, not literally.[56] In other places the literal meaning sounds scandalous, and therefore again only the figurative (sc. allegorical) meaning is acceptable (the Song of Songs; the opening of the eyes after the first sin). Finally, in the case of Jacob's and Eliphaz' dreams, both meanings can be used: literal and allegorical.

This observation can cast some light on the relation between metaphors and allegorical interpretations by Gregory. A metaphor taken word by word does not make sense. Neither did the literal meaning of the Song of Songs make sense to the Gregory. That is the reason why he could not distinguish between these two senses. If an allegorical interpretation becomes part of the tradition of a certain text, readers are hardly able to distinguish it from metaphor.

The great advantage of Gregory's allegorical interpretation, namely reconciling God's retributive justice of the Book of Proverbs with its critique in Job and giving spiritual sense to words of Job's vicious friends, has also its downside. If the biblical text can have multiple, even opposite meanings, it cannot be used as a rule, at least without external authority. On the one hand, Gregory's

55 Cf. Straw, "Sin," 80.

56 Gregory is convinced that some parts of the Scripture do not have a literal sense, but only an allegorical one. Cf. Straw, "Sin," 80.

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notion of orthodoxy is more a result of the convergence of several authorities: the gospel, sound teaching, and his own personal experience with monastic life and with God. On the other hand, neither the heretics could be defined by their teaching, because they have learned certain truths during their disputes with Christians (though imperfectly). Rather their main characteristic consists in the opposition to God's people. The division in Church arises not over the interpretation of the biblical text, but between those who live spiritual life and those who do not.

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PART 2

'To Listen, but Never Understand' – Interactions of a Text (Isa 6:9–10)

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The Strange Mission of Isaiah

Gabriela Ivana Vlková

1 Introduction

The sixth chapter of the Book of Isaiah is one of the best-known texts in the Old Testament. It describes Isaiah's vision of the Lord on the throne (6:1–4), followed by the scene of cleaning of the prophet's lips (6:5–6), and his conversation with God (6:8–11), supplemented with a concluding comment (6:12–13). The pericope is clearly distinguishable from the surrounding text.[1]

The text is quite peculiar and gives rise to a number of difficult questions. If it describes Isaiah's calling, as many authors maintain,[2] why is it not positioned at the very start of the book, as it is e.g. in the case of Jeremiah or Ezekiel? Furthermore, in verses 9–10, the prophet of God receives a strange mission: it seems that his preaching is intended to harden the hearts of the people and prevent their conversion (own translation by the contributor):

> Go and tell this people: "Keep listening, but do not understand; and keep looking, but do not know!" Make the heart of this people fat; make their ears heavy and their eyes shut. So that they may not see with their eyes and listen with their ears and understand with their heart and turn and be healed.

Does this mean that the responsibility for hardening the heart of the people falls on God, who calls the prophet to carry out such a strange task? Because it is difficult to imagine a God who would call a prophet simply to prevent the conversion of the people, more than a few authors are of the opinion that ch. 6 does not contain a description of Isaiah's calling, but rather of a specific mission from the time when Isaiah had already become a prophet.[3] Others presume that the calling described in vv. 9–10 includes the prophet's retrospective reflections on the effect of his own work.[4]

1 The person of Isaiah does not appear in the previous chapter containing woe oracles and other words of judgment. The next chapter speaks of him in the third person and depicts a different episode in his life.

2 E.g. Engnell, *Call*, 25–53; Habel, "Form," 309–314; Wildberger, *Jesaja*, 239–242; etc.

3 E.g. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah*, 223–224.

4 Cf. Wildberger, *Jesaja*, 242; Joosten, "Prosopopée," 241 etc.

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No matter how difficult to understand these verses are, the fact remains that they have had a significant impact on later authors, both Christian and Jewish. The present chapter should serve as an introduction to the discussion about the influence of Isa 6:9–10 on the following tradition, trying to summarise the main results of scholarly debate about the role of these difficult verses in the book of Isaiah.

2 The Hebrew Text

Vv. 9–10 are part of an exchange between the prophet and God in vv. 8–11. God asks whom should he send to his people and the prophet offers himself (v. 8). God explains the nature of the task to him (v. 9–10). The prophet asks for more information and God responds (v. 11). Thus the entire conversation is characterised by a concentric structure and vv. 9–10, containing the mission statement noted above, are right at the centre of the dialogue between the prophet and God. The verses stand out not only because of their central position within the dialogue, but in particular because of their shocking content.

But did the original Hebrew text really contain what we usually read into it? Aside from the traditional Masoretic text (hereinafter MT),[5] today we have at our disposal other Hebrew textual witnesses, especially the complete scroll of Isaiah from Qumran (1QIsa[a]), which offers another rendering of Isa 6:9–10.[6]

MT

v. 9

לֵךְ וְאָמַרְתָּ לָעָם הַזֶּה	Go and tell this people:
שִׁמְעוּ שָׁמוֹעַ	"Keep on listening,
וְאַל־תָּבִינוּ	but do not understand;
וּרְאוּ רָאוֹ	and keep on looking,
וְאַל־תֵּדָעוּ׃	but do not know!"

v. 10

הַשְׁמֵן לֵב־הָעָם הַזֶּה	Make the heart of this people fat;
וְאָזְנָיו הַכְבֵּד	make their ears heavy
וְעֵינָיו הָשַׁע	and their eyes shut.
פֶּן־יִרְאֶה בְעֵינָיו	So that they may not see with their eyes
וּבְאָזְנָיו יִשְׁמָע	and listen with their ears

5 The Hebrew MT is taken from Goshen-Gottstein, *Book*.

6 The text is available in printed editions, but also on the internet: http://dss.collections.imj.org.il/isaiah (cited 22-2-2017).

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וּלְבָבוֹ יָבִין	and understand with their heart
וְשָׁב וְרָפָא לוֹ׃	and turn and be healed.

1QIsa[a][7]

v. 9

לך ואמרת לעם הזה	Go and tell to this people:
שמעו שמוע	"Keep on listening,
ועל־תבינו[8]	*because you may* understand,
ראו ראו	Keep on looking,
ועל־תדעו	*because you may* perceive!"

v. 10

השמ לב־העם הזה[9]	Make the heart of this people *appalled*
ואזניו הכבד	Stop its ears
ועיניו השע	and turn away its eyes,
פן־יראה בעיניו	lest it see with its eyes [evil]
ובאזניו ישמעו	and hear with its ears [evil].[10]
בלבבו יבין[11]	*Let it understand* in its heart
ושב ורפא לו	and return and be healed!

7 English translation of the Qumran text is offered by Brownlee, *Meaning*, 186–187, also adopted by Evans, *To See*, 55.

8 In place of the negative particle אַל (MT), 1QIsa[a] has על in both locations where it appears in v. 9. The question is whether in this context על may be understood as an abbreviation of the causal אֲשֶׁר עַל (*with the aim/so that*), which is the view of Brownlee, *Meaning*, 186 and Evans, *To See*, 55.

9 By contrast with the MT, in the Qumran text the final ן is missing. It is noteworthy that מ at the end of השמ does not have the usual final form ם. The omission of ן may be a copyist's error. But the form of the verb by itself is meaningful. According to Brownlee, *Meaning*, 186, it may be the imperative *hif'il* השם, thus with the meaning "appalled".

10 According to Brownlee, *Meaning*, 187, the text expresses the desire to avoid "evil". A parallel may be seen in Isa 33:15 or in the text of the Qumran hymn 1QH[a] XV,2–3: "… my eyes are *turning away* from looking at evil, my ears are *turning away* from listening to bloodshed, my heart is frightened of evil thoughts …" (the numbering differs slightly from that given in the edition García Martínez, Tiggchelaar, *Dead*).

11 Unlike in the MT, the copulative ו is missing. Because of this, the subsequent text can be read as not subordinated to the conjunction פן (*so as not to*). In place of the missing ו, we find the phonetically close ב. However, the previous verb ends with an extra ו (comparing to MT), being a plural form. It also makes sense. If the copyist had mistakenly attached the ו to the verb form ישמע, in the master copy there could be the form ובלבבו. Indeed, some MT manuscripts, although less important ones, give precisely this broader form at this location (cf. the critical apparatus in Goshen-Gottstein, *Book*, 23 [כג]) and it is also testified in the Qumran fragment 4QIsa[f].

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While the manuscripts of the MT differ only slightly from one another (and their variations do not affect the meaning of the text),[12] the Qumran scroll contains the above-noted variants (not counting the spelling variations). Each variant by itself could be considered as an error caused by a mishearing or by carelessness on the part of the copyist, but altogether the variants may indeed alter the meaning of the text. However, even if the above interpretation of 1QIsa[a] is taken as correct and not as an accidental result of careless copying,[13] it cannot be considered as the original meaning of Isaiah's text, because it is theologically "easier". If it was clear from the outset that Isa 6:9–10 talks about conveying knowledge, moving the hearts of the people, protecting their eyes and their ears from what might hurt them, and thus enabling the conversion and healing of the people, it is difficult to see why and how the MT could have made such a problematic shift. By contrast, a shift in the opposite direction is understandable and likely.

3 The Septuagint

The Septuagint version (hereinafter LXX) of Isaiah sometimes differs from the MT too. Its Hebrew *Vorlage* need not differ significantly from the consonant text of the pre-Masoretic tradition, even if it was corrupt in some places. But the translator did often paraphrase, and sometimes used to guess at the meaning of terms he did not fully understand and translated them probably just by intuition. In addition, he often updated the text and introduced his own theological concepts.[14] The verses of our interest, too, say something different in the Greek text than they do in the MT:[15]

12 The critical apparatus in Goshen-Gottstein, *Book*, 23 (כג) points to insignificant variations in certain less important manuscripts.

13 Brownlee's interpretation of the Qumran manuscript was criticised (Yoshimura, *Did Jesus*, 80–84 et al.).

14 On the characteristics of the Greek translation of the Book of Isaiah, see Ziegler, *Untersuchungen*; Seeligmann, *Septuagint*; recently Troxel, *LXX-Isaiah*.

15 The Greek text is taken from the edition Ziegler, *Septuaginta. Isaias.*

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v. 9

Πορεύθητι καὶ εἰπὸν τῷ λαῷ τούτῳ[16]	Go and say to this people:
Ἀκοῇ ἀκούσετε	"You *will* listen by listening
καὶ οὐ μὴ συνῆτε	but you will not understand
καὶ βλέποντες βλέψετε	and you *will* look with looking
καὶ οὐ μὴ ἴδητε[17]	but you will not see."

v. 10

ἐπαχύνθη γὰρ ἡ καρδία τοῦ λαοῦ τούτου	*For* the heart of this people *has grown* fat
καὶ τοῖς ὠσὶν αὐτῶν βαρέως ἤκουσαν	and with their ears they *have heard heavily*
καὶ τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς αὐτῶν ἐκάμμυσαν	and they *have shut* their eyes
μήποτε ἴδωσι τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς	so that they might not see with their eyes
καὶ τοῖς ὠσὶν ἀκούσωσι	and hear with their ears
καὶ τῇ καρδίᾳ συνῶσι	and understand with their heart
καὶ ἐπιστρέψωσιν	and turn
καὶ ἰάσομαι[18] αὐτούς	so that I [may] *heal* them (?)

The text in LXX deviates from the MT in the following points:

a) The prophecy in v. 9 applies to the future. The prophet does not encourage people to *hear* and *see* (cf. the reinforced imperatives of the words שׁמע and ראה in the MT) without an appropriate response, but rather says that in the future, despite their *hearing* and *seeing*, they will understand nothing.

16 Several earlier manuscripts give: πορευθητι προς τον λαον τουτον και ειπον αυτω/αυτοις. It may be assumed that they are subject to a backwards influence from Acts 28:26, which the Septuagint adopted. Some manuscripts have the imperative form πορευου at the beginning.

17 Cod. Sinaiticus and Venetus (both more or less influenced by Origen's recension) have, instead of ιδητε, ειδητε, which is closer to the MT. Some manuscripts give the conjunctive ακουσητε or βλεψητε for v. 9 instead of the future ακουσετε or βλεψετε, but the future is better attested and should be preferred.

18 Cod. Venetus uses the conjunctive ιασωμαι here. The future, however, is better attested.

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b) What has just been said relates to another discrepancy in v. 10, which provides an explanation. While, according to the MT, the prophet received a directive to cause (or allow) a lack of understanding among the people, the LXX speaks of the hardening as a fact already established: *because* (γάρ) the people themselves had hardened their hearts (the heart is the subject of the passive aorist ἐπαχύνθη, *has grown fat*), they did not hear properly and refused to see (aorists [βαρέως] ἤκουσαν and ἐκάμμυσαν). The following conjunction μήποτε (*so that not*) does not introduce what the Lord intends to prevent, but rather what the people themselves decided: they did not wish to see, hear, or understand.

c) For completeness we should add that a third potential discrepancy occurs right at the conclusion of v. 10. The future ἰάσομαι (*I will heal*) changes into the first person, interrupting the previous series of conjunctives. This weakens the dependency of the verb to heal on the conjunction μήποτε (*so that not*). "To be healed" is not just another item on the list of things people are preventing; it is more likely that the verb in the future tense has a deliberative meaning ("may I heal?").[19] Some scholars have even asserted that the LXX conclusion in v. 10 might represent a promise. If so, it would entail a sharp contrast from what is given in the MT.[20]

How did the translator arrive at his interpretation?

(*a*) *The beginning of v. 10*

The translator might have vocalised the consonant Hebrew text in another way than the MT. The initial השמן has been evaluated as the passive perfect hofʿal (and not the active imperative hifʿîl). It is therefore only natural that the heart of the people must be considered the subject of the verb. The form ἐπαχύνθη (*has grown fat*) does not often occur in the Greek Bible. Aside from the Book of Isaiah, it is found only in Deut 32:15, where it also expresses the idea of hardening.[21] Some authors hypothesise that Deut 32:15 is a text that may have influenced the translator of Isa 6:10.[22] It is possible, because the Greek translator of Isaiah had at his disposal already extant Greek versions of other biblical books, particularly the Pentateuch, which was used as an

19 This can correspond to the translation "and I would heal them", chosen by Silva, *Esaias*, 830.

20 *Septuaginta Deutsch*, 1236 admits this possibility, among others, in a footnote: *"auf dass ich sie heilen werde:* oder – im Sinn einer Heilszusage – *und dann werde ich sie heilen".*

21 The form also occurs in Isa 34:6; the verse talks about God's sword, greasy with the fat of his slain enemies.

22 Cf. Ziegler, *Untersuchungen*, 108.

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exemplar for proper translation and was a source of dictionary equivalents for many other books of the Septuagint.[23]

What is not so clear is how the translator thought of two other verbs that follow in v. 10, if he had the consonant expressions הכבד and השע in front of him. He may have understood הכבד as an infinitive absolute in adverbial use and for this reason he chose the adverb βαρέως (*with difficulty/heavily*)[24] and, for the sake of clarity, added ἤκουσαν (*they heard*). In any case, his translation remains consistent with his foregoing choice to make it obvious that the people themselves were to blame for their deafness and blindness.[25] This interpretation has its parallels in other prophetic texts,[26] and for readers of that time and culture it was evidently easier and theologically more admissible than to admit that the hardening of the people was God's intention.

(*b*) *V. 9*

The translator's understanding of the beginning of v. 10 may have influenced his choice of words for v. 9. He was not in the position of a simultaneous translator and he was not meeting with the text of Isa 6 for the first time. He knew what he would like to say. Furthermore, he also knew the history and the religious tradition of Israel and thus he knew that during the era that followed the proclamations of the prophet Isaiah, the nation, according to the prophetic understanding of history, was punished and paid for its own hardness.[27] Hence the future tense in v. 9.

(*c*) *The end of v. 10*

Why is the first person future form ἰάσομαι (*I heal*) used at the end of v. 10? The consonant MT text uses a third person verb. Nevertheless, if the translator wants to let the Lord, as the only guarantor of health, speak further, the change of grammatical person is quite natural. The presumption is often made that the Greek text of 6:10 was formulated by analogy with Isa 57:19, where the Lord really promises healing.[28] The translator knew that God's plan included not just punishment, but healing as well. The question remains: What exactly did

23 Cf. Troxel, *LXX-Isaiah*, 104.

24 Regarding the adverbial use of the absolute infinitive, see Waltke, O'Connor, *Introduction*, 592–593 (although this particular verb does not appear among his examples).

25 The translator of the Book of Isaiah often modifies the text, and not only for stylistic reasons but also to maintain intellectual coherence within the individual textual units (cf. Troxel, *LXX-Isaiah*, 89–90).

26 Cf. Ezek 12:2.

27 Cf. Troxel, *LXX-Isaiah*, 89.

28 Cf. *Septuaginta Deutsch: Erläuterungen*, 2519–2520.

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the translator want to express by the use of the future tense in 6:10? It cannot be definitively ruled out that he introduced a positive twist at this early point, because he anticipates it, and at the end of v. 12, quite near to v. 10, instead of the words that we read in MT: "the loneliness in the middle of the earth will be vast" (וְרַבָּה הָעֲזוּבָה בְּקֶרֶב הָאָרֶץ), he translates: "those who remain will multiply on the earth" (καὶ οἱ καταλειφθέντες πληθυνθήσονται ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς). Nevertheless, we do not expect the Septuagint to deviate so sharply from the MT in 6:10. We prefer the deliberative meaning: "may I heal?" Under such circumstances, could God heal his people, even if he wanted to?

4 Other Ancient Translations

4.1 *The Later Greek Translations*

While Aquila and Theodotion agree with the LXX, the version of Symmachos, preserved in the commentary of Theodoret of Cyrus, slightly differs from the LXX in v. 10:

ὁ λαὸς οὗτος τὰ ὦτα ἐβάρυνε	This people *made heavy* its ears
καὶ τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς αὐτοῦ ἔμυσε	and *shut* its eyes
μήπως ἴδῃ ἐν τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς αὐτοῦ	lest it should see with its eyes,
καὶ ἐν τοῖς ὠσὶν ἀκούῃ	and hear with their ears,
καὶ ἡ καρδία αὐτοῦ συνῇ	and its heart discern
καὶ ἐπιστραφῇ	and it turn
καὶ ἰαθῇ	and be healed.[29]

The omission of the clause regarding the heart at the beginning of the verse may be due to Theodoret, there is no need to pay special attention to it.[30] The verbal form ἐβάρυνε (*made heavy*), though cognate to the adverb βαρέως that is in the LXX, corresponds more closely to the MT. Also the passive form ἰαθῇ (third person) at the end of the verse is closer to MT than the LXX form ἰάσομαι (first person). Nevertheless, the meaning of this text of Symmachos is essentially the same as the meaning of the verse in the LXX: the people themselves are responsible for their obduracy.

29 For the Greek text cf. apparatus in Ziegler, *Septuaginta*, 144 or Evans, *To see*, 65; the English translation is taken from Evans.

30 Cf. Evans, *To See*, 65.

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4.2 *Targum and Peshitta*

According to Targum Jonathan, the prophet is to go to the people already unable to see and hear properly:

v. 9

איזיל ותימר לעמא הדין	Go and speak to this people,
דשמעין משמע	that hear, indeed,
ולא מסתכלין	but do not understand,
וְחָזֹן מְחֲזָא	and see, indeed,
וְלָא יָדְעִין	but do not perceive.[31]

The obduracy is in established fact, as it is in the LXX. But at the same time, Isaiah is ordered:

v. 10

טפיש לביה דעמא הדין	Make the heart of this people dull,
ואודנוהי יקר	and make their ears heavy,
ועינוהי טמטים	and shut their eyes;
דלמא יחזון בעיניהון	lest they see with their eyes
ובאודנהון ישמעון	and hear with their ears
ובליבהון יסתכלון	and understand with their hearts
ויתובון וישתביק להון	and turn again and it be forgiven them.

The prophet seems to increase the callousness of the people, which corresponds, more or less, to the sense of v. 10 in the MT.[32]

According to the Syrian Peshitta, the prophet would turn to the people with words that in v. 9 correspond to the MT. Verse 10, however, seems to be closer to the LXX. Isaiah would speak to the people already hardened:

ʾtʿby lh gyr lbh dʿmʾ hnʾ	For the heart of this people *become dull*
wʾdnwhy ʾwwr	and their ears *are heavy*
wʿynwhy šʿ	and their eyes *are closed*
dlʾ nḥzʾ bʿynwhy	lest they see with their eyes
wnšmʿ bʾdnwhy	and hear with their ears

31 For the Aramaic text see Stenning, *The Targum of Isaiah*, 23; the English translation corresponds, except for a few details, to the translation offered in Chilton, *The Isaiah Targum*, 15.

32 Cf. Evans, *To see*, 70.

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wnstkl blbh	and understand with their hearts
wntwb wnštbw lh	and turn again and be forgiven them.[33]

In summary: Peshitta, seems to have chosen a halfway compromise solution, similarly as Targum Jonathan, though in a different way.

4.3 *Vulgata*

All the ancient translations discussed so far soften the harshness of the Hebrew text in one way or other. Jerome, however, was able to cope with it in his Latin translation:

v. 9

Vade et dices populo huic	Go and say to this people:
audite audientes	hearing, you hear
et nolite intellegere	yet do not understand,
et videte visionem	and seeing, you see
et nolite cognoscere.	yet do not perceive.

v. 10

excaeca cor populi huius	Blind the hearts of this people
et aures eius adgrava	and make their ears heavy
et oculos eius claude	and close their eyes,
ne forte videat oculis suis	so that they do not see with their own eyes
et auribus suis audiat et	or hear with their own ears
corde suo intellegat	or understand with their hearts
et convertatur et sanem eum.[34]	or turn so that I may heal them

Jerome preferred the Hebrew text. In his commentary, he dealt with the difficult verses in the light of his knowledge of Rom 11. On that basis, he believed that Isa 6:9–10 proclaimed what has been fulfilled in Christ: the wonderful decision of God that the unfaithfulness of the chosen people would enable the faith of the Gentiles.[35]

33 The Syrian text and its translation is taken from Evans, *To see*, 77–78.

34 The Latin text is taken from Weber, *Biblia*, 1103.

35 Cf. Hieronumus, *Commentarius in Esaiam* III, 6,9–10 (CCSL 73, 91–94).

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5 The Function within the Book of Isaiah

Now we turn to the harsh Hebrew reading of Isa 6:9–10 preserved in the MT. The strange mission, to which the prophet is called, should be assessed in the context of the book as a whole, and on the basis of a comparison with other texts that may be understood as parallels.

V. 9 begins with the instruction to go and speak to *this people* (לָעָם הַזֶּה). The preceding text of the book reveals that "this people" has unclean lips, in sharp contrast to the holiness of the Lord (cf. vv. 3–4). It is a *people* burdened with iniquity (cf. 1:4), a *people* that has provoked God's anger (cf. 5:25). The prophet was a part of this *people* (cf. 6:5), but his lips were cleansed, he was thereby forgiven and relieved from iniquity and sin (cf. 6:7). It is clear that the *people* from whom he has been separated is not innocent.

The prophet is to challenge "guilty" people to listen and to look, even though they will *not understand* and *not know* (cf. אַל־תָּבִינוּ/אַל־תֵּדָעוּ). At the very beginning of the book, we also read that the people do not *understand* or *know* (Isa 1:13: לֹא יָדַע / לֹא הִתְבּוֹנָן), and this statement comes immediately after all of heaven and earth were commanded to listen (Isa 1:2), probably because the people were not ready to do so. It would therefore be futile to talk to them any more. Everything that should bring them back would instead prompt them to rebel (Isa 1:5). But according to Isa 6:9, the prophet should speak nevertheless, making the situation worse: neither hearing nor seeing is actually possible, despite the reinforced imperatives "Keep on listening!" (שִׁמְעוּ שָׁמוֹעַ) and "Keep on seeing!" (רְאוּ רָאוֹ). Whereas the three *hifʿîl* imperatives in v. 10 have the causative or the permissive meaning,[36] the prophet seems to be blameable for the dysfunctional eyes, ears and hearts. However, before the evaluation of the extent of his responsibility, and therefore the responsibility of God, it is useful to explore what the Book of Isaiah says in other passages about hardening described as a defect of the heart, eyes, or ears.[37]

5.1 *Isaiah 29*

A striking parallel occurs in Isa 29. This chapter criticises the political leadership of Jerusalem at the time of the Assyrian threat.[38] At 29:9, there is a pair

36 The negative conjunctive פֶּן (*lest/so that not*) in the second half of the verse rules out a possible declarative meaning of the *hifʿîl* imperatives.

37 The Book of Isaiah speaks of deafness and blindness fairly often (cf. Isa 42:7.16.18–19; 43:8; 56:10). Below, however, due regard will be given to those places in which there is some tension between God's and human responsibility for this unhappy situation.

38 Cf. Evans, *To See*, 43; McLaughlin, "Their Hearts," 9–12.

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of imperatives: "Blind yourselves and be blind!" (הִשְׁתַּעֲשְׁעוּ וְשֹׁעוּ). Both imperatives have the same root שׁעע ('stick/paste together') as the verb used in 6:10. This time, however, the verbal forms are not causative (*hifʿîl*). There reflexive *hitpalpel* and simple *qal*. The directive is intended for the people or their representatives; they would cause their own blindness. Nevertheless, it is stated straight away in Isa 29:10 that the Lord is the one who has poured a spirit of deep sleep upon them; he has closed their eyes and covered their heads.[39] There is a clear tension: on the one hand, it is the people who blind themselves; on the other hand, their blindness has been ordered by the Lord, and therefore it is inevitable.

Immediately afterwards, Isa 29:13 speaks about the heart: people move their hearts *away from* (מִן) the Lord.[40] Apparently, they subordinate themselves to the Lord, but in fact they act according to a *human commandment* (מִצְוַת אֲנָשִׁים). They lack faith and do not rely on God's power. The hardening in Isa 29:9–14 is reminiscent of the hardening in Isa 6:10, because it uses a similar and rare terminology.[41] Yet, while Isa 6:10 emphasises God's judgment, Isa 29 brings the tension between human and divine responsibility into sharp relief and it highlights the guilt of the people.

5.2 *Isaiah 44*

The problem of responsibility for a similar hardening can be seen in Isa 44:18, although here it does not apply to Israel or its representatives, but to the makers of idols.[42] They neither *know* (לֹא יָדְעוּ) nor *understand* (לֹא יָבִינוּ), because of the inability of their eyes and their *hearts*. The verb טחׂ, which expresses inability, is a *hapax legomenon*. According to some authors, its meaning is 'to be closed' and the eyes and heart are the grammatical subject.[43] Others say that the eyes and heart seem to be the object of the verb, and that it expresses

39 Subsequently, it is stated that eyes are *prophets* (נְבִיאִים) and heads are seers (חֹזִים). Perhaps this is a later gloss (cf. Beuken, *Isaiah*, 95). The Lord nevertheless remains responsible for the situation.

40 Two verses further on, those who act *without/apart from* (מִן) *the Lord* and thus *in the dark* are criticised as well.

41 The root שׁעע in the sense of *stick/paste together* seems to appear only in Isa 6:10 and 29:9. Possibly it can also be read in Isa 32:3, if we vocalise one of the verbs תְּשָׁעֶינָה (*closed/shut* – speaking about the eyes), not תִּשְׁעֶינָה as the MT (the meaning of the root שׁעה is to gaze) (cf. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah*, 429). In such a case, Isa 32:3 would describe just the remedy for the problems in 6:10 and 29:9.

42 Evans, *To See*, 44–45 and McLaughlin, "Their Hearts," 12–15 pointed to the similarity between the depictions of hardening in Isa 44:18 and Isa 6:9–10.

43 Cf. Koole, *Isaiah*, 397–398.

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soiling or *covering*.[44] In such a case Isa 44:18 ascribes the responsibility for the blindness to God: it would be the Lord himself who blinds the idol makers, but they do not understand the uselessness and futility of their actions.[45]

5.3 *Isaiah 59 and 63–64*

In what are almost the final chapters of the Book of Isaiah, we find, within two penitential texts, verses where the people admit the defects of their own *eyes* and *hearts*. In Isa 59:9–10, someone confesses to belonging among those people that lack law and justice and are *as if blind* (כַּעִוְרִים) despite the presence of light. The cause of this situation is their sin and lack of righteousness, which act as a barrier that obscures the face of God (Isa 59:2). The people themselves are thus responsible for their own blindness. Hiding the face of God is also mentioned in Isa 64:6 and it is said that God himself has delivered the people into the power of their iniquities. According to Isa 63:17, shortly before that, he *hardened* (*hifʿil* קשׁח) their *hearts*.

On the basis of the parallels noted above, it may be maintained that in the Book of Isaiah, to its very end, there is an apparent tension: the people are guilty, but responsibility rests with God, too. In this regard, a number of authors call attention to the fact that Isa 6 is reminiscent of the scene in 1 Kgs 22:19–23.[46] There, too, a certain prophet Micaiah maintains that he saw the Lord sitting on a throne, surrounded by heavenly beings (v. 19). The Lord is also seeking – and finds – a volunteer to wreak destruction (vv. 20–21). It falls on King Ahab and it is irrevocable, because justice must be done and Ahab's prior sin must be penalised (cf. 1 Kgs 21:17; 22:37–38). The spilling of Naboth's blood, along with the social injustice done, must be punished. Is it simply coincidence that the vision in Isa 6 follows the chapter in which "those who join house to house and field to field" are accused (cf. Isa 5:8)? This is the same sin that Ahab is guilty of, and the Lord has not let that go unpunished. The decision is irrevocable, because the injustice is too large. It is for this reason that the Lord does not move the hearts of the people to conversion but rather causes or permits them to harden. It is increasingly clear that God has his own plan and reaffirms his words. And his plan is a plan of judgment.[47]

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44 Cf. the translation of the verse in Evans, *To See*, 44 and McLaughlin, "Their Hearts," 12.

45 Not everyone considers God the subject of the verb טָח, even if the verb is active. Watts, *Isaiah*, 138 reads: "because it [= the idol] has closed their eyes from seeing". But this is not the majority opinion.

46 Cf. Wildberger, *Jesaja*, 235–236; McLaughlin, "Their Hearts," 2–4 et al.

47 While interpreting Isa 6:9–10, it is important to note that the preceding chapters present the people as already hardened (cf. 1:2–4; 5:4.7.12–13.18–19.21.24). Otherwise, it could lead to a misleading theological perspective that God punishes the innocent. In 6:9–10,

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It is likely that it is primarily the hearts of the leaders of the people that are hardened (cf. Isa 3:12). They are the exploiters (Isa 3:14–15). Aside from this, immediately after ch. 6 the tale of King Ahaz's failure follows (Isa 7:10–17); it is tied to an erroneous political decision during the time of the Syro-Ephraimite war (Isa 7 intimates what 1 Kgs 16 states explicitly: Ahaz seeks help from the Assyrian king). Political impulsiveness is added to the sin of injustice.[48] Political mistakes ultimately cause enemies to carry out raids (Isa 7:17 and 8:6–8). From this perspective, the Lord *wants* the people to become hardened, because he intends to carry out his judgment.

However, the problem still remains. What is the point of the prophet's speaking at all, if the people will not understand? Some authors consider it important that the Bible attributes great power to the prophetic word. The spoken word represents the actual beginning of the judgment.[49] But even this is not an adequate answer. It comes rather in Isa 6:11–13: the state of hardening is to endure until there has been a total devastation of the country (Isa 5:9 and 6:11–12), and then even a tenth of those who remain will be punished once again (Isa 6:13). But the "Holy Seed" will remain (v. 13b). Isaiah's prophecy is sealed, according to Isa 8:16. It means that it is incomprehensible to his contemporaries. For them the Lord has become a *stumbling block* and a *rock of falling* (Isa 8:14). But the prophecy will serve future generations, especially after the Babylonian exile. They will not only experience the end of the destruction that has been foretold, but they will also understand God's word and work. In other words, they will gain insight (Isa 29:18; 30:20–21; 35:5; 42:16; etc.).[50]

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the people are guilty. They resist God's plan, but they cannot forestall it by opposing it. God works with what they want, "mais il le veut radicalement, tirant toutes les conclusions théologique d'une telle surdité et d'un tel aveuglement" (Sonnet, "Motif," 231; Hesse, *Verstockungsproblem*, 67–68, reasons similarly).

48 In ch. 29 as well, erroneous policies are foregrounded because the leaders are *blinded* and lack faith in God. Clements interprets the hardening in Isa 6:9–10 as a purely political problem. In his opinion, this time, Isaiah is a prophet who demands not conversion and obedience to God's commandments, but a specific answer to specific political events at a decisive moment. Once a bad decision is made, it cannot be undone (cf. Clements, *Isaiah*, 77; a similar stance to the theme of hardening is taken in Lind, "Political," 317–318, 328).

49 "The speaking of the prophetic words is not a call for repentance, but a signal for the beginning of God's action." (Key, "Magical," 204).

50 The problem of the hardening of the people cannot be resolved strictly within the context of Protoisaiah (chs. 1–39), but rather in the context of the entire book. Chapters 6 and 8 look to the future fulfilment of the judgment and to the coming of salvation (cf. Rendtorff, "Jesaja," 76–77).

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6 Conclusion

There is no doubt that Isa 6:9–10 is a difficult text. The efforts of almost all ancient translations (except Vulgata) to eliminate or alleviate the tension caused by these verses and to offer a more simplistic interpretation is understandable.

However, it may be seen that the problem of the hardening of the people, *willed* or at least *permitted* by God, may be resolved from the perspective of the entire book of Isaiah, taken as a meaningful whole. The hardening is neither scope, nor the end of God's plan. It is only one painful stage on the path to future salvation. The judgement and the purgatorial punishment *must* fall, so that the people can be holy (Isa 6:13) and withstand the holiness of God (Isa 6:3). Such a perspective could help the first readers of the canonical Book of Isaiah to understand the sense of the greatest national crises, the Babylonian exile, and to cope with it.

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A Blinding Message

The Paradox of Obstinacy in Early Christian Theology

Jan Roskovec

1 The Calling of Isaiah and the Motif of Obstinacy

The peculiar vision, in which Isaiah is called by God to the task of a prophet, issues into a rather puzzling commission to "make this people's heart coarse, make their ears dull, shut their eyes tight …"[1] by his message. This text (Isa 6:9–10) is quite unique and in itself difficult to comprehend. At the same time, it has an interesting "effectual history" in the thought of the early Christians. But before we turn to its later impact, we note, at least briefly, some observations about the text itself and about its context in the Old Testament thought.

In all its uniqueness, it belongs to a larger group of texts. It is an expression of the motif of obstinacy,[2] which otherwise has relatively broad attestation throughout the Old Testament. Biblical authors – especially, although not exclusively, the prophets – sometimes describe the disbelieving attitude of the people of Israel towards their God metaphorically, in terms of defective communicative senses, viz. *hearing* and *seeing*, and of defective understanding – i.e. inner appropriation of what comes (or does not come) through the receptors – viz. *heart* (sometimes translated as "mind").[3]

Such figurative language in itself does not explain anything about the cause(s) of such deficiency – in the common experience it is usually also not evident, what is behind the inability of some people to use their eyes, ears or minds in a "normal", i.e. generally expected way. What the metaphor *does* say, however, is that the problem consists in *misapprehension of reality*: there is something that can, and indeed should be seen and/or heard and understood – but, strangely, it is not. Both blindness and deafness – and, after all, wrong judgement too – are *dysfunctions*. So the image also carries, at least inherently, some propensity towards its overcoming: dysfunctions call for *healing*.

1 Translation of The New Jerusalem Bible.

2 Evans, *To See*, uses "obduracy". The careful study by Evans still remains the basic treatment of this complex issue and I am much indebted to it.

3 Other metaphors, such as *stiff neck* (Exod 32:9; 33:3.5; 34:9) or *stubbornness* (Deut 9:6.13.27; 10:16; 31:27; cf. Evans, *To see*, 47), express an attitude of deliberate resistance or opposition.

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Accordingly, the "obstinacy" imagery of blindness, deafness, and a misguided mind (heart) is used in the Old Testament in two main kinds of texts: (a) in *charges*, where the people are blamed for their deficient perception (e.g. Deut 29:1–3; Isa 29:9–10; 44:18; Jer 5:21–23; Ezek 12:2–3; Zech 7:11–12; cf. Neh 9:16–17.29), and (b) in *promises* that this condition will be overcome (Isa 9:1; 29:18; 32:3–4; 35:5; 42:7.16; Jer 31:33; Ezek 11:19–20; 36:26–27). Perhaps somewhere in between may be positioned the texts where the "blind" and "deaf" are challenged to see and hear in spite of their handicap (e.g. Isa 42:18–20) or where they themselves complain of their incapacity with the perspective that God may change it (e.g. Isa 63:17).

We may note that the motif of obstinacy is not the only, and probably also not the original locus, where the metaphors of impaired perception and comprehension appear. The issue of (right) understanding is a characteristic topos of the sapiential texts, where "heart" is often used as the seat of sense ("mind"),[4] and the metaphors of dysfunctional senses are typical for the disdainful critique of the pagan idols.[5] Both of these connotations are probably assumed in the motif.

Among the obstinacy texts, the commissioning of the prophet Isaiah in Isa 6:9–10 is unique by virtue of the direct connection it makes between the ministry of the prophet – who is no "false prophet", but receives a proper vocation from God himself, and accordingly is also not sent with a deceptive, misleading message – and that blinding and deafening of the people he is being sent to produce. To put it succinctly, both the *hiphils* (הַשְׁמֵן, הַכְבֵּד הָשַׁע) and the lest-clause (פֶּן) of Isa 6:10 should be understood as having causative (or purposive), not just resultive force:[6] the prophet is called to "*make* this people's heart coarse … their ears dull, shut their eyes tight".

To be sure, the thought that the cause of people's inability to see, hear, and understand is with God is not so rare in the Old Testament. It is implied by the basic conviction of Israel's faith, that God is a supreme ruler, who is in control of both the outer and inner conditions of human life. Such thought is articulated e.g. in the story of God persuading Moses to become his messenger to the people in Egypt (Exod 4:11): "'Who gave a person a mouth?' Yahweh said to

4 See e.g. Prov 6:32; 7:7; 9:4; 15:32; 19:8; Qoh 10:3.14.

5 See e.g. Deut 4:28; Jer 10:5. A logical bridge to the motif of obstinacy may be expressed in Pss 115:5–7 and 135:16–17: those who rely on the idols resemble the objects of their devotion.

6 Evans, *To See*, 18f.

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him. 'Who makes a person dumb or deaf, gives sight or makes blind? Is it not I, Yahweh?'"

This thought is also expressed in the two texts that are perhaps closest in content to Isa 6:9–10. In *Deut 29:3*, the strange fact that Israel learned so little from the forty years of Yahweh's guidance in the desert is given some explanation by asserting that "until today Yahweh has not given you a heart to understand, eyes to see, or ears to hear." In *Isa 29:9–14*, the blindness of the people who are addressed is part of the judgement of Yahweh, who "has closed your eyes – the prophets" and "has veiled your heads – the seers". This is followed by another image of a sealed book that, because of the seal, cannot be read even by someone who can read. Through this image, the idea of something extant, yet inaccessible, is made particularly obvious.

In this form, the motif of God disabling people, so that they cannot perceive correctly, has its own logic. When God's sovereignty is the main value, then it is logical or even necessary to think of God as "creating darkness" as well as light and "creating evil" as well as "making peace" (Isa 45:7). Inherent in this concept, however, is the question of how God can make people accountable for their obstinacy, if it was caused by him.[7]

The unique feature of Isa 6:9–10 is that in this text, the means by which God intends to deprive people of their perception is not withholding communication to them, but, on the contrary, sending his real and right messenger to them. The prophet Isaiah is sent to his people as prophets usually are, i.e. with a message from God (v. 9: "Go, and say to this people …"), but that very message is meant to have a blinding and deafening effect. This is truly puzzling and it seems to call for the passage to be understood in terms of an overstatement, or rather a paradox. On the other hand, the inherent question of justice – i.e. whether it is right to judge the people for their misapprehension – is much easier to answer.

2 Jesus, the Revealer

The conviction that Jesus of Nazareth, as God's Messiah, has inaugurated the new age of God's reasserted rule ("kingdom of God") is one of the constitutive elements of the early Christian faith. The inner strength of this conviction is reflected in the fact that it had to be asserted against the grain of the external evidence: Jesus' public ministry was ended by his execution, and despite the testimonies claiming his new presence, interpreted by the apocalyptic

7 This question is posed explicitly by Paul in Rom 3:5–8.

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category of resurrection, the "kingdom of God" did not arrive in any generally palpable way. It is quite probable that the roots of this conviction may be found in the "self-understanding" of Jesus himself and in the expectations elicited by his words and deeds.[8]

Quite naturally, the forms of expression of that conviction were sought in terms of Old Testament prophecies being fulfilled – among others also the promises of the restoration of people's perceptiveness towards God's communication in word and deed.

2.1 *New Covenant*

One of these prophecies was the promise of the *new covenant*. The notion of the "new covenant" has been preserved in the New Testament as a stable element in the *eucharistic texts* (1 Cor 11:25 par. Luke 22:20; cf. Mark 14:24 par. Matt 26:28). In them, Jesus' death, represented by his (shed) blood, is interpreted as both the moment at which the covenant was concluded (or confirmed) and the means by which this occurred. Even if the link between his expected death and the "new covenant" was not made explicit already by Jesus himself – although this is not impossible[9] – it was certainly made so quite soon afterwards. The connection of the motif with the self-understanding of Christians, involving implicit reference to its source-text *Jer 31:31–33*, is already attested by Paul, in *2 Cor 3:2–6*.

According to Jeremiah, the "new covenant" would not be new in terms of its contents, e.g. some new precepts issued by God, but in the manner of its perception. God's law, already given and related to the "old covenant", is expected to be internally appropriated in the hearts of the people. A similar image of a "new heart", promised to be given to the people by Yahweh himself, was used by Ezekiel (*Ezek 36:26f; 11:19f*), envisioning that such inward transformation would bring people to spontaneously "following God's statutes and keeping and obeying his ordinances". Both Jeremiah and Ezekiel speak about overcoming people's obstinacy towards God's will and use images concentrating on

8 The issue of Jesus' self-esteem, or perhaps his messianic self-awareness, has been examined many times with very diverse results. It is not important for the present study and is clearly beyond its scope. For a survey see e.g. Theissen-Merz, *Der historische Jesus*, 447–488.

9 The question of historicity of the Last Supper is still debated. Although it is generally recognised as plausible that Jesus did meet with his disciples at some farewell festive meal immediately before his arrest, both the details and general framework of such meal (was it a Passover meal?) are disputed. If we suppose that Jesus used the farewell meal to give a positive meaning to his impending death by showing it as a means through which the communion represented by the meal would be maintained, the concept of the "new covenant" might occur as a ready element for such interpretation. See e.g. Lichtenberger, "Bund," 226f.

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"heart" as a new "material" for recording or mediation of God's will. Paul combined their imagery and used it to characterise the status of his Christian addressees. According to him, the activity of God's Spirit, stirred up by the gospel of Jesus Christ risen from death, is demonstrated by changing people's hearts, using them as a "writing material" of a new kind.

2.2 *Jesus' Reply to John the Baptist*

Another expression of the thought that the obstinacy of the people of God was overcome is localised in the ministry of Jesus. In the passage preserved in the Gospel source Q (*Matt 11:5 par. Luke 7,22*), Jesus interprets his ministry, especially his miraculous deeds, in terms of fulfilment of the Old Testament prophecies. The doubts voiced by the Baptist were probably incited by the small scale of Jesus' activity, i.e. by the fact that it did not bring about any noticeable broader changes. Jesus, in his reply, simply insists that "this is it", that the messianic age, expected and promised by the prophets, is really signalled by those deeds of (miraculous) help to a few individuals, however singular they may be.

To support this claim, Jesus in that gospel passage[10] describes his activity by a paraphrase or a conflation of several sayings of the Old Testament prophets. One of these passages is *Isa 35:5*: "Then the eyes of the blind will be opened, the ears of the deaf unsealed." This prophetic pronouncement belongs among the Old Testament obstinacy passages and it is clear from its context that it does not depict just medical restoration, i.e. the miraculous healing of disabled persons. By using the imagery of blindness and deafness, the author of Isa 35 may be consciously referring to the appointment passage of Isa 6 and so pronouncing the overcoming of its dooming perspective.[11] By alluding to Isa 35, Jesus claims that the prophecy of the restoration of people's perceptiveness towards God is being fulfilled in his ministry – the inability to hear, see, and understand *God* as engaged in history is being healed. It is the obstinacy of the people towards God that Jesus is up to overcome and his deeds of miraculous help to tangibly disabled individuals should serve as pointers to the reality that Jesus is bringing about. The question of the Baptist makes it clear, however, that these pointers do not function automatically; the new reality is not self-evident to everyone.

10 In my opinion, there are reasons to think that this reply reflects the authentic attitude of the 'historical Jesus' – more about this in Roskovec, "Miracle Worker".

11 So e.g. Watts, *Isaiah 34–66*, 15. Chapters 6 and 35 probably do not come from the same author; ch. 35 shows some affiliation to Deuteroisaiah and may be dependent on him – cf. Kaiser, *Jesaja 13–39*, 280.

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2.3 *Johannine Signs*

This interpretation of Jesus' acts of healing was later developed in the Johannine concept of the miracles as *signs* (σημεῖα).[12] According to the Fourth Gospel, Jesus' miracles are intended to be "read" – to receive them properly is to find and perceive some further meaning in them. They should function in this way particularly for the reader. Through the persons participating in the narrated events, the reader is exposed to the question of what it means to "see a sign" and how such perception may be achieved. Eventually, this question is brought explicitly to the fore by Jesus in John 6:26. There, in an emphatic "amen amen" saying, Jesus personally corrects the earlier remark of the narrator (the evangelist) that "the people saw the sign that he had done" (6:14). Jesus, however, maintains that the people were looking for him "not because they saw signs, but because they were filled by eating bread". As the story goes on, it becomes more and more clear that to notice the miraculous or supernatural character of Jesus' deeds is not a sufficient clue to their meaning.

The issue of correct perception is in the focus of the passage linked with the penultimate one in the series of Jesus' signs, the healing of a man born blind (John 9). All the sign-passages in John, except for the first two that took place in Cana (John 2:1–11 and 4:46–54), are formed in a similar pattern: a short narration of the miraculous deed itself is followed by a longer discourse, which in some way examines the meaning of the sign.[13] In this case, the discourse is made up of a series of encounters and dialogues, which progressively resemble police interrogation or even a court trial. In the opening dialogue with his disciples, Jesus clearly states that his deed is intended as a *revelation* (v. 3: ἵνα φανερωθῇ τὰ ἔργα τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ) and accordingly recalls his previous description of his mission as "the light of the world" (v. 5, cf. 8:12; 12:46). The metaphor of light conveys the general meaning of a precondition for seeing, and so has a connotation of enlightenment or revelation. By opening the eyes of a blind man, Jesus comprehensibly presents himself as "the light". In the Johannine context, however, the motif of light also carries the connotation of *judgement*. At the very first occurrence of the metaphor of light in the Gospel narrative (John 3:17–21),[14] Jesus uses it to describe the "mechanism" of judgement: even in the presence of light, one can opt for darkness. The judgement – judgement of God, to be sure – is presented in this way as the reverse side of revelation.

12 Cf. John 2:11.23; 3:2; 4:48.54; 6:2.14.26; 7:31; 9:16; 11:47; 12:18.37.

13 In the case of the last sign, raising Lazarus from the dead (John 11:1–46), the sequence is reverted and the discourse part precedes the deed.

14 Before the narrative, it already appears in the prologue (John 1:4–5.7–9), which indicates that it is one of the main motifs (metaphors) of John's theological language.

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This concept of judgement is developed in the story of John 9. With typical irony, the fourth evangelist introduces the theme of judgement through the mouths of Jesus' disciples – their only role in the story! They react to the reality of the man's impairment with a question about sin, a typical judgement-question: "Who sinned?" (v. 2: τίς ἥμαρτεν). Jesus rejects this approach (as he did in John 3:17), but the other figures in the story show some persistent propensity to pass judgement – at first on the healed man (vv. 13–15.34), but eventually over Jesus (v. 16.24). The whole passage ends, not without surprise, with Jesus' proclamation "I came into this world for judgement" (v. 39) and with his judgement on his opponents: "Your sin remains" (v. 41: ἡ ἁμαρτία ὑμῶν μένει). The statement "I came for judgement" seems to contradict the earlier assurance that "God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world" (John 3:17), but in fact, the same tension was already signalled in chap. 3, as we have noted: judgement comes as the reverse side of revelation. In chap. 9, Jesus refused to judge the man, and instead ended his impairment – opened his eyes. At the end, he gives as the reason why "the sin" of his opponents "remains" their self-assurance "we see" (v. 41).

The inner development of the passage is a narrative exposition of the concluding pronouncement of Jesus, in which the "procedure" of his judgement[15] is described by the paradox "… so that those who do not see may see and those who do see become blind" (v. 39). The one who was born blind gained sight. It should be noted that, at the climax of the passage, before he confesses his faith in Jesus (v. 38), the man must be *told* whom he sees (vv. 36–37): even with his healed eyes, he still needs Jesus to point to himself – in analogy to his ἐγώ εἰμι sayings elsewhere in the Gospel (cf. John 4:26). On the other hand, the opponents are shown as those who, despite their self-confident effort to assess the event, are unable to see what they have in front of them. They are unable to find the clue.

The narration traces the tenacity with which all the "interrogators" try to explain what happened by asking "how" Jesus did it (πῶς: vv. 10, 15, 19, 26). The futility of such effort is exposed with irony, notoriously typical for John. The healing at the beginning is described with unusual graphic details (vv. 6–7: Jesus spits on the ground, makes mud, spreads it on the man's eyes and tells him to go and wash in the pool of Siloam). This "procedure" is then recounted in reply to the recurrent how-questions (vv. 11, 15, 27). Naturally, such a description explains nothing – but what better answer can be given to such a

15 The ἵνα-clause in v. 39 does not express the purpose of the judgement, but of the coming, i.e. it should be understood as a description of the content (or "mechanism") of the judgement.

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question? Those who ask it seem to be blinded by the very concentration on what they have before their eyes, or rather, by their fixation on the way they want to understand (to see) it.

Thus, the Johannine story displays the strange, indeed paradoxical – but narratively graspable – reality that Jesus at the same time both overcomes the inability to see (the healed blind man) and causes it (the inquirers).

3 Obstinacy Caused by Jesus

The basic understanding of Jesus as a "revealer", which is undoubtedly a general Christological outlook of early Christian thought, should not obscure the fact that the opposite impact of Jesus' posing a problem or an obstacle was also represented and reflected in that tradition. The motif of obstinacy did not disappear from the horizon of the New Testament, but rather, the paradox of a *blinding message* seems to emerge here in sharper form.

The range of New Testament texts presenting Jesus as causing difficulties of understanding or perception to people is not small and at several such points a direct reference is made to Isa 6:9–10. It is evident that the early Christian reflection of the meaning of Jesus of Nazareth represents an important stage in the "effectual history"[16] of this text, or, from the inverse perspective, that the Isaianic text informed that reflection in its basic task of managing and conceptualising the challenges and tensions between the "obvious" history of Jesus and the meaning the Christians saw in it.

3.1 *A Riddle*

A direct reference to the text Isa 6:9–10 appears at two instances in the Jesus tradition. The first one is *Mark 4:12* (with parallels in Matt 13:14–15 and Luke 8:10), where the quotation is part of Jesus' explanation of why not all people are able to understand his teaching in parables.[17] At this place, in full consonance with the text of Isa 6, it is Jesus' *teaching* that poses the difficulty, specifically the particular form of his message – his speaking in parables. The applicative

16 I use this term to translate "Wirkungsgeschichte". The meaning of this hermeneutical category is explained by Ulrich Luz in the foreword to his commentary on Matthew (Luz, *Matthäus I*, 78–82); see also Luz, *Matthew in History*, 23–38.

17 Closer inspection of the wording of the quotation would show that it was not simply taken over either from the LXX or as a literal rendering of the Masoretic Text and that the reading in Mark emphasises the final meaning of the ἵνα- and μήποτε-clauses: the incapability of the people is caused by the message and forgiveness is prevented. For a full discussion see Evans, "Function," 126–133.

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saying that introduces the quotation is based on the ambiguity of the term παραβολή. It can mean "comparison" ("simile" or "example", "model"), an image that facilitates understanding. However, as something "set by", it can also mean "a riddle", something that is "just close" and, in order to be understood, requires a clue.[18] A "parable" can both elucidate and obscure meaning, and it is the latter meaning of παραβολή that is stressed here. Jesus' "teaching in parables" has different effects on different groups of people. The right understanding of the parables depends not on a special wit, but on the perspective.

Jesus characterises the situation of understanding his message as "being given (knowing?) the mystery of God's kingdom" (Mark 4:11: ὑμῖν τὸ μυστήριον δέδοται τῆς βασιλείας τοῦ θεου) and accredits it to his disciples – who just have asked him for an explanation of the parables. He points them to the clue they have by "being inside" – as opposed to those "outside" (οἱ ἔξω). The meaning of "being inside" is easy to specify from both the narrower and wider context of the saying. Mark 4:10 describes the enquirers as "those around him with the Twelve" (οἱ περὶ αὐτὸν σὺν τοῖς δώδεκα) and Mark 3:14 identifies as one of the purposes of Jesus' appointed disciples "to be with him" (ἐποίησεν δώδεκα ἵνα ὦσιν μετ᾽ αὐτοῦ).[19] The "mystery of the kingdom of God" is "given" not through imparting some secret knowledge, but in sharing the close community with Jesus. The precondition for understanding Jesus' teaching does not lie in a special mental capacity, the required knowledge is existential, and the parables begin to make sense in a certain life situation of "being with" Jesus. To put it quite simply: Jesus himself is the clue to his parables.

This is underlined also by the context of Mark (taken over by the other two Synoptics), which links the "hermeneutical discourse" with the "Parable of the sower". In this composition, Jesus, after a general explanation about the condition for understanding the parables, goes on to interpret the particular parable. This interpretation provides a practical illustration of the "inside" perspective. At the same time, it widens the scope of possible causes of failure of "the word" far beyond the lack of understanding, while the main point of the parable is to show that such a failure is not fatal: the yield of the crop outweighs the losses at the sowing.

18 As e.g. Meier, *Marginal Jew 5*, 32, notes, the parables of Jesus do indeed often have "a riddle-like quality". In fact, the two senses of the term are not, in principle, contradictory. The riddles are, in the end, also tools for better understanding: when the clue is discovered and the riddle resolved, it helps to deepen or sharpen understanding of the matter.

19 Cf. also Mark 3:31–34, where Jesus pronounces "those around him" (τοὺς περὶ αὐτὸν κύκλῳ) to be his true family – in contrast to his blood relatives, who remained "standing outside" (ἔξω στήκοντες).

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Such distinguishing between the outsider and insider perspective and the conviction that it is the latter one that allows a deeper, superior, perhaps "spiritual" understanding may be taken also in quite a general sense. One is reminded of the modern hermeneutical dispute about which perspective leads to a more reliable understanding of texts, and indeed, understanding in general.[20] The dispute can be expressed e.g. in terms of the "classical" contrast between literal versus allegorical sense as well as in the socio-anthropological terms of etic versus emic perspective.[21] In Mark, however, the problem has a specific character. As the story of develops, it becomes clear that the insider position of the disciples on its own does not guarantee anything. Part of the Marcan scheme of the "messianic secret"[22] is the striking obtuseness of Jesus' disciples.[23] It is particularly manifested in their inability to comprehend the right meaning of Jesus' miraculous "feeding of the thousands". Interestingly, this very episode has the largest attestation in the gospel tradition; in Mark itself it is narrated twice.

The matter is presented in the form of a *riddle*: after the first feeding (Mark 6:31–44) the disciples find themselves alone in a boat "in the middle" of a stormy sea (v. 47: ἐν μέσῳ τῆς θαλάσσης). When they see Jesus walking to them over the water, they are "shattered" (v. 50: ἐταράχθησαν), and even later, when – joined by Jesus – they reach the shore, they still remain "astonished" (v. 51: ἐξίσταντο). The problem they have is to recognise Jesus' true identity; they are puzzled about it. In the attached remark (v. 52), the evangelist explains the reason for their puzzlement: "they did not come to understanding over the loaves (οὐ γὰρ συνῆκαν ἐπὶ τοῖς ἄρτοις), as their heart was hardened":[24] the understanding of Jesus' identity would have been enabled by some previous understanding. Although it is not clear, what the disciples were meant to have comprehended "over the loaves", it is quite obvious that this condensed description refers to a situation full of clear allusions to what later became

20 The passage Mark 4:10–12 is used in this way e.g. by Frank Kermode in his reflections "on the interpretation of narrative", cf. Kermode, *Genesis*, esp. pp. 2–4, 15–21, 23–47. On p. 47, Kermode stresses the ambiguous character (a "double function") of a parable.

21 Originally a linguistic distinction between two ways of approaching the phenomenon of sounding speech (phonetics–phonemics) was applied to interpretations of human behaviour by F.L. Pike (cf. Pike, *Standpoints*).

22 I use this traditional term of William Wrede in a somehow vaguer meaning – to denote that cover of repeated misunderstanding under which the messiahship of Jesus, or indeed, his sonship of God, appears in the Gospel of Mark.

23 Both Matthew and Luke tend to "soften" Mark in this respect.

24 The "hardened heart" typically belongs to the group of metaphors of the obstinacy motif. It is used in the same form in e.g. Ps 95:8; Ezek 2:4; Prov 28:14; the "uncomprehending" heart also appears in Isa 6:10.

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the central part of Christian worship, signifying the most intimate communion with Jesus.

The second part of the riddle comes with the second feeding story (Mark 8:1–9), which is also followed by a scene in a boat. This time, Jesus is with the disciples from the beginning, but something else seems to be missing. The disciples assume that they have no bread with them, because *they* forgot to take some (Mark 8:14.16). Again, in a somewhat enigmatic manner, the evangelist remarks that there was still one loaf in the boat. When the disciples start to talk about what they did not take, Jesus wonders about their incomprehension. His reproach is an open reference to the biblical obstinacy tradition. After blaming the disciples for "hardened heart" he goes on, asking: "Do you have eyes, and fail to see? Do you have ears, and fail to hear?" (Mark 8:18). The question is a quotation from Jer 5:21, but that saying itself may be reminiscent of Isa 6:9–10.[25]

Jesus then points the disciples to the clue, viz. the outcome of both feeding miracles, the surplus produced by them. It turns out that they do remember that, but just do not employ this memory in their considerations. In this way, they are reminded of the fact, which they persistently seem to ignore: of the existence of a loaf of bread that is present, even though it was not brought in by *them*. The passage has an open ending. Jesus' final question, "Do you not yet understand?" (Mark 8:21), remains without a direct answer. It is there, perhaps, for the readers: are they able to solve the riddle? The way to the right answer goes through comprehending that it is the riddle of Jesus' true identity.

In the following dialogue of Jesus with his disciples near Caesarea Philippi (Mark 8:27–33), it becomes clear, what is so hard for the disciples to understand or acknowledge. As Jesus declares himself prepared to accomplish his mission in the execution on the cross, his "plain speech" (v. 32: παρρησίᾳ) has definitely a blinding effect on Peter.

3.2 *Signs*

The discourse about the true bread in John 6 suggests itself as a Johannine relecture of the Markan "riddle of the loaves". The discourse follows the feeding story (John 6:1–15) and develops the meaning of this "sign". It is typical for the Johannine expression that the enigma does not lie in vague words or mere allusive formulations. Jesus speaks here quite frankly: "I am the bread of life" (John 6:35, with repetitions in vv. 41, 48, 51). But in spite of that, indeed, because Jesus' self-identification is so straightforward, the people are puzzled.

25 As Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 195, notes, the sequence heart–ears–eyes in both texts is quite conspicuous.

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The problem is obvious: "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" (v. 52) Taken at face value, Jesus' words would mean an invitation to cannibalism. There must be some further sense of "eating his flesh and drinking his blood" (vv. 53–56), i.e. of profiting from his death. But even when this is clear, if this is what the "sign" signifies, the disciples are quite swift to recognise that it is "a hard speech" (σκληρός ὁ λόγος, v. 60).

It is also with regard to Jesus' *deeds*, interpreted as "signs", that Isa 6:9–10 is directly quoted in *John 12:40*. By this quotation, combined with the question of Isa 53,1 ("Lord, who has believed our message?"), the evangelist retrospectively summarises the whole of Jesus' public ministry. It appears to him as a paradox: "in spite of the many signs – they did not believe in him" (v. 37). The same paradox was already anticipated in the prologue, in a formulation reminiscent of ancient Greek tragedies (John 1:10–11): the "world did not recognise" (οὐκ ἔγνω) the one through whom it came into being (δι᾽αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο).

The combination with the introductory verse of the last Servant song (Isa 53) probably emphasises the connection with the passion story, which in John begins right after this retrospective, with the scene in the cenacle (John 13). The paradox of the "crucified Messiah" (to use the Pauline phrase) is prefigured in the misunderstanding around Jesus' deeds, in not receiving their "message".[26]

A closer look at the wording of the reference to Isaiah in John 12:40 will show that it is not a literal quotation of the two texts from the prophet, but rather a composition inspired also by the formulations from other Isaianic texts (Isa 56:10; 42:18–19; 29:10.18).[27] This indicates that the author of the composition was aware of the existence of the motif of obstinacy, and was in fact referring to this motif, rather than just to two isolated texts.

At the same time, again in accordance with the prologue (John 1:12–13), the generally negative assessment of the outcome of Jesus' ministry is breached by the remark about those who, in spite of all that, did believe in Jesus (John 12:42–43). In this way, faith in Jesus is depicted as a surprising phenomenon – indeed, a miracle. However, as this faith eventually consists of recognising

26 Implicitly, through the connection of the quotation of Isa 53,1 ("who has believed our message [ἀκοή]?") to the statement "although he had performed so many signs in front of them, they did not believe in him" in John 12:37–38, performing signs is understood as spreading a message.

27 Evans, "Function," 133–136.

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Jesus as the true revelation of God (cf. John 1:18), i.e. comprehending "the truth" (cf. John 14:6 and 18:37), it must be understood as a most natural phenomenon.

3.3 *Advance of the Gospel*

The third explicit New Testament quotation of Isa 6:9–10 occurs in *Acts 28:26–27*. The general context is similar to that in John 12: a retrospective summary. In this case, it is (Luke's) Paul who, in his last speech to the Jews – and his very last speech in the book – uses the words of the prophet to assess the outcome of his mission.[28] The reaction to his teaching at this last instance, described in the previous verses (vv. 24–25), is typical of Paul's missionary story in the whole of the Book of Acts: the witness about Jesus causes division in the audience – some "are convinced", whereas others "refuse to believe". The assessment of such an outcome may go in both directions. It may emphasise, positively, that at least some did receive the message,[29] or negatively, that the reception was only partial. Adding the sweeping judgement of Isa 6 seems to encourage the negative assessment. However, the final outcome is proclaimed only in verse 28: "Let it be known to you then that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen."

This reflects the scheme in which the story of the missionary spreading of the gospel is recounted throughout the whole Book of Acts: the rejection in a synagogue usually makes Paul go elsewhere and turn to the gentile audience, by which he is usually received positively,[30] although not always.[31] The main thrust of this pattern is not to blame the Jews for their rejection of the Christian message, but to show that the adversities cannot but help to move the gospel forward. In this perspective, even the harshest word of judgement contained in Isa 6:9–10 is interpreted in terms of (just) redirecting God's message to others, who "will listen".

28 The wording of the quotation at this place is nearly identical to that of the Septuagint. This passage is examined also in the following chapter of this volume by Petr Mareček.

29 E.g. along the lines of the Old Testament (prophetic) motif of the "remnant", as Keener, *Acts 4*, 3750, suggests.

30 This pattern already appears before Paul's conversion and before the general conflict with the synagogue. Its first instance is the spreading of the missionary activity caused by the persecution after the stoning of Stephen (Acts 8:1.4). Cf. Acts 13:44–52; 14:1–7.19–21; 16:16–34; 17:1–15; 18:1–8; 19:8–10.

31 Sometimes the resistance to Paul's gospel comes from pagans, as is the case with the riot in Ephesus (Acts 19:23–40), or, less severely, with the reserved response in Athens (Acts 17:16–34).

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We may note that the formulation "was dispatched" (ἀπεστάλη) of Acts 28:28 does not imply that "the salvation" would be taken away from one group (the Jews) and given over to the other (the gentiles). The choice of the term might echo Paul's self-identification as an "apostle" sent to the gentiles (cf. Rom 1:5; Gal 1:16; 2:9) and its emphasis is just that the rejection had the effect of prompting the move of the gospel and widening the scope of its addressees.

This pattern, illustrating the invincible character of God's working through Jesus, can be traced in both volumes of Luke's work. The interpretation of the rejection of Jesus by the Jews as the impetus advancing the move of the gospel to the wider audience of the gentiles is a variation on a more general pattern. The link that interconnects the two volumes of Luke's work is the path of the "word" of God going from Jerusalem "to the ends of the earth" (cf. Acts 1:8) and this progress is described as "powered" by two forces. The reader is assured that events are set in motion by the Spirit of God from above,[32] but on the earth the motive forces are usually the steps taken by the adversaries.[33]

In terms of the history of theological thought, the origin of this pattern may be found in the contrast thought-scheme "crucifixion–resurrection", by which the experience of the unexpected new presence of Jesus shortly after his crucifixion is interpreted as the result and manifestation of God's decisive intervention, overturning the tragic fact of Jesus' death: the resurrection of Jesus is understood as God's decisive counter-action against his crucifixion. It was this understanding that enabled the search for a positive meaning of Jesus' death and led to the soteriological interpretations of it. We may suppose that it was quite an early development, as this thought-pattern is found already in

32 The activity of the Holy Spirit is noted already at the birth of John the Baptist (Luke 1:15) and Jesus (Luke 1:35); cf. further Luke 2:27; 4:1.14. In the Acts, the decisive impetus is, of course, the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2), being echoed during the further steps of the mission.

33 This perspective already emerges at the very beginning of the story: the fact that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, the expected birthplace of the Davidic Messiah (Luke 2:4.11: πόλις Δαυίδ, cf. John 7:42; Matt 2:5–6), although it was not his home town, is explained by Luke as a result of the pragmatic interests of the worldly ruler Augustus. Later on, although the route of the gospel "from Jerusalem to the ends of the world" had been initially determined and linked with empowering by the Spirit by Jesus himself (Acts 1:8), the first witnesses really leave Jerusalem only when the persecution after the martyrdom of Stephen compels them to such a move. The same pattern can be discerned behind further steps on the route of the gospel as well, down to what eventually takes Paul to Rome, the centre of the empire.

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Paul. It is discernible not only in his explicit statements about the contents of his gospel, but also in the way he links his apostolic existence with the contents of the gospel, condensed into the phrase "it is when I am weak that I am strong" (2 Cor 12:10).[34] If this phrase is intended to be more than just a witty paradox, it must be pointing to some concealed force that becomes evident only in situations where no human or other "natural" agency is to be expected.

3.4 *Remnant*

When we turn from the Paul of Luke to the authentic writings of Paul, we find no direct quotation of Isa 6:9–10. However, in *Rom 11:8* Paul uses a conflation of two Old Testament texts that also belong among the distinct expressions of the motif of obstinacy: Deut 29:3 and Isa 29:10. The harsh commission of the prophet Isaiah might well have been the third text that Paul had in mind here.

The basis of the conflation was probably the text Deut 29:3 – the admonition that Moses addressed to the people of Israel before the renewal of the covenant. It reminds the people of the many "trials, signs and wonders" that they had seen during the deliverance from Egypt, however not grasping their meaning. This was because the Lord had *not given* them "a heart to understand, or eyes to see, or ears to hear". Paul sharpens the statement by turning God's action into the positive: "God *gave* them … eyes, so that they do not see, ears, so that they do not hear" (ὀφθαλμοὺς τοῦ μὴ βλέπειν καὶ ὦτα τοῦ μὴ ἀκούειν). He achieves this shift by using Isa 29:10 as an introductory sentence ("the Lord has poured upon you a spirit of lethargy …") and by inserting the negative final clauses τοῦ μή before the infinitive verbs. The result is a formulation of outspoken paradox – the failure to see or hear is caused not by the absence, but by the presence of the (crippled?) senses. This is very close to how the results of the prophet's mission are described in Isa 6:9. Paul then goes on and strengthens the point further by adding a third quotation, this time from the lament of a sufferer against his adversaries (Ps 69:23–24). Together with the catchword of "seeing", the connecting element with the previous quotations is the pattern of inverting the function (the table becoming a trap, eyes "darkened" – disabled for seeing).

34 Cf. also 1 Cor 2:1–5; 4:9–13; 2 Cor 4:7–18; 6:3–10; 12:7–10. This interpretation of the hardships of Paul's missionary engagement as the necessary foil for manifesting the inner power of the gospel emerges most frequently in the correspondence to Corinth, but the pattern of a paradox, in which the power of the gospel – i.e. the power of resurrection – proves its efficiency in the existential situations of weakness, appears in variations in the other letters too (cf. e.g. Rom 5:3–5; Phil 3:7–11).

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The context of this conflated quotation is similar to that of the Lukan Paul's speech in Acts 28: the Israel question. Paul employs the quotation at the end of a longer discourse, Rom 9–11, in which he wrestles with a problem, painful for him both personally (cf. Rom 9:1–2) and from the point of his argument about the sovereign and all-overcoming power of God's grace (χάρις) – the problem of the rejection of his gospel by the majority of the Jews. The main aspects of the issue may be expressed in two questions. (1) What does the fact of Israel's resistance to the gospel of the Messiah Jesus say about God? Are his promises void, as he is not able – or not willing – to carry them out? (2) And what does it say about the fate of the people of God?

In his effort to answer these questions, Paul applies two key thoughts: the concept of "remnant" and the scheme of "broadening the scope". The concept of *remnant* ([ὑπό]λειμμα: Rom 9:27–29; 11:4) he takes from the Old Testament[35] and presents it as the basic characteristic of the way in which God had been sustaining his people throughout history: each time opening – or indeed, "adding" – the future to Israel by preserving but a small remainder. From this perspective, the historical continuity of Israel had never been a matter of "natural" procreation. Already in its Old Testament milieu, the concept of remnant introduced into the considerations about God's people the notion of selection. It distinguishes between the general (national) community and the "true" one and it is often bound together with the conviction that the very existence of the true remainder is due to some special and not expectable act of God.[36]

Paul's term for this unconditioned salvific intervention of God is χάρις, manifested with tremendous clarity in the resurrection of Jesus. The logical link of the mentioned basic character of Israel, being sustained through its remnant, with this core of Paul's gospel, may be found in his considerations about Abraham, the forefather of Israel. In Rom 4, he explains the nature of Abraham's faith in close association with his offspring, i.e. his "son of promise", Isaac – and concludes that the faith in having a son, in the situation of the "mortified body" (Rom 4:19: κατενόησεν τὸ ἑαυτοῦ σῶμα νενεκρωμένον … καὶ τὴν νέκρωσιν τῆς μήτρας Σάρρας) is of the same kind as "our" faith "in him who

35 He makes explicit reference to Isa 10:22–23 and 1:9 and to 1 Kgs 19:18.

36 This is well illustrated in the story of Elijah in 1 Kgs 19, to which Paul refers in Rom 11:3–5. On the whole, the concept of remnant is quite widespread throughout the writings of the Old Testament, it is connected with more than one term (שאר, יתר, with a more univocal connotation of deliverance: פלט, שרד) and it can have both negative (admonition and threat) and positive (promise and hope) meaning, depending on the particular context. It is difficult to reconstruct its genetic line, but its origins are probably to be sought outside the Old Testament, and within it the concept gains its particular profile in the prophetic books. An instructive survey is provided by Hasel, *Remnant*.

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raised from the dead our Lord Jesus" (Rom 4:25). Later on, when Paul comes to the issue of Israel in ch. 9, he points to her "Abrahamic" beginning (Rom 9:7–9) and shows this "unnatural" sort of procreation as a perennial feature of Israel.

Here we can also see the connection with the other aspect of Paul's solution of the Israel question, the scheme of *broadening the scope* (cf. Rom 9:23–26; 10:12; 11:11–12.25–27). It stands in a certain tension vis-à-vis the notion of remnant, which itself associates rather a diminishing scale. But Paul insists on the paradox: God's sustenance of the remnant eventually does not mean selection, restriction, narrowing down, but rather opening up wider access. In Paul's view, the *ecclesia* of God, summoned by the gospel, is not a Jewish elite of the faithful, but a congregation made up of the Jews *and* the pagans. Election does not necessarily mean selection (cf. Rom 11:5: κατ᾽ἐκλογὴν χάριτος).

It is this concept of radical "broadening the scope" that allows Paul also to keep up hope for those Jews who have so far answered his testimony with rejection – to imagine the possibility of the re-grafting of the once broken-off branches (Rom 11:23). Such a process is quite unnatural, in the nature really impossible. Paul's reasoning in this case is rather simplistic: "it is in God's power" (δυνατὸς γάρ ἐστιν ὁ θεός). The same phrase he used to characterise the faith of Abraham that "God is able (δυνατός ἐστιν) to do what he had promised" (Rom 4:21). Again, it is not difficult to see that the basis of this conviction is faith in God, who "has raised Jesus from the dead".

It is within this scheme of paradoxical "broadening the scope" that Paul employs the motif of obstinacy caused by God. To express the paradox in another way: the people were provided with a dimmed spirit, not-seeing eyes and not-hearing ears – in order to come to the right understanding, seeing and hearing on a detour, following the pagans, to whom their obstinacy had opened the gates. On this detour they may become acquainted anew with the God they traditionally claimed to know, to learn what it really means that he is the God who "brings the dead to life and calls into existence what does not exist" (Rom 4:17; cf. 9:25–26).

4 Conclusions

There are difficult questions concerning the involvement of God in human history. Among other things, they are provoked by the fact of apostasy, the apparent failure of God's dealing with people. Is God unable to change the human heart? A possible answer to such questions is the concept of God's (selective) election. However, there is also a less accessible answer – the motif of obstinacy, and particularly its most distinct form, the motif of a "blinding message",

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obstinacy emerging in a direct encounter with God's word, as described in Isa 6:9–10.

We have noted that this problem does not fade from sight in the New Testament, despite the conviction of its early Christian authors that in Jesus of Nazareth, God acted in a decisive way to overcome the alienation of people, providing the supreme revelation. The notion of the "new covenant", originating in a prophetic expectation of a renewal based on healed perceptiveness of the people towards God's will, became a key expression of this conviction, preserved in both the Pauline and the gospel traditions. Nevertheless, the difficult question of God's involvement in history remained. It took the shape of the question of Jesus' crucifixion. The followers of Jesus, convinced that Jesus had brought about the fulfilment of the Jewish expectations of the Messiah, had to face the fact that no evident messianic age had arrived and that the majority of the Jews remained unconvinced.

In this situation, the concept of a "blinding message" again offered itself as a useful tool for coping with the problem. We have seen that this concept was used to characterize both main aspects of Jesus' ministry, his words and deeds. The ministry of Jesus was understood by the early Christians as the ultimate revelation of God, yet both his teaching in "parables" and his miraculous deeds, by the fourth evangelist interpreted as "signs", were at certain point described with reference to Isa 6.

In the writings of Paul, which represent the earliest literary level of the Christian texts, we have analysed the connection of the motif of a "blinding message" with the person of Jesus himself, especially with his execution on the cross and resurrection, in which Paul saw the climax and the clue to the whole of Jesus' story and to the significance of his person – opening a new image of God to both old "residents" and newcomers in the people of God. It became clear to Paul and to his theological heirs among the early Christian authors that this Christological image makes God widely accessible, but hardly acceptable by the same token. Indeed, a blinding message.

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Isaiah 6:9–10 in the Ending of Luke-Acts

Petr Mareček

1 Introduction

The Acts of the Apostles end with a telling and climactic episode[1] about Paul's testimony in Rome: Acts 28:17–31. It is one of the most difficult passages of the book.[2] This finale has some characteristics of incompleteness and does not give answers to the questions that a reader would instinctively ask. Why does Paul make no contact with the Roman Christians? Why do we not hear anything about the Christians in Rome? This is astonishing, since Paul had written a notable letter to the Roman church. Had Paul been deserted by the local Christians (cf. 2 Tim 4:16)?[3] Why does the Book of Acts not continue with an account of Paul's trial before the emperor, which is mentioned repeatedly, culminating in either his release or his martyrdom?[4] We are not able to answer these questions[5] and have to be content with the ending that we have, anything else has to be left for speculations.

Such ending of the story about Paul's testimony in Rome is rather abrupt. It records just his testimony to the Jews of Rome and their reaction, which, according to Paul, had been foreseen in the Scripture in Isaiah 6:9–10. This text was used quite frequently in early Christian preaching when the proclaimers of the gospel were confronted with rejection (cf. Matt 13:14–15; Mark 4:12; Luke 8:10; John 12:39–40; cf. also Rom 11:8).[6] The content of the ending of Acts itself confirms that the author of Acts did not intend to write a historical report about the affairs of Paul in Rome (even if is based on actual memories). It is his

1 Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 790; cf. also e.g. Marshall, *Acts*, 441.

2 For a survey of the history of research on Acts 28:(16)17–31, see e.g. Puskas, *Conclusion*, 1–32; Troftgruben, *Conclusion*, 7–36.

3 1 Clement 5:5 ascribes his martyrdom to ζῆλος καὶ ἔρις "jealousy and strife"; these may have been found within the Christian community itself.

4 Commentators since Chrysostom have been constrained to ask why Luke did not finish the story of Paul. "[The writer] leaves the hearer with a thirst for more: the heathen authors do the same [in their writings], for to know everything makes the reader dull and jaded." (Chrysostom, *Hom.* 55).

5 Cf. Marguerat, "'Et quand'," 1–21; see also Omerzu, "Schweigen," 127–156.

6 Interactions with this text in those New Testament passages are examined in the chapter "A blinding message: the paradox of obstinacy in early Christian theology" of this book.

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editorial conclusion.[7] For Luke the person of Paul remains central, but seen in a role exceeding his personal stories.

The present chapter is divided into two major parts. The first part will examine structural setting of the text of Acts 28:17–31 and the function of the Old Testament quotation of Isaiah 6:9–10 in it. The second part will show that the text of Acts 28:17–31 recapitulates some major themes of the whole work of Luke and brings them to a culmination.

2 Isaiah 6:9–10 in the Structure of Acts 28:17–31

Acts 28:17–31, the last major pericope of the closing part of the Acts, can be considered a crowning conclusion of the whole double work of Luke-Acts. It reports Paul's stay of about two years in Rome. The text of the pericope is a well-defined textual unit. The verses 16 and 30–31 mutually correspond and form an *inclusio*: verse 16 reports Paul's arrival in Rome and his lodging under military control, while verses 30–31 give information about Paul's missionary activity while lodging in Rome for two years.[8] The transitional verse 16 marks the end of the last "we" passage in Acts (27:1–28:16),[9] and so it would be more appropriately included in the previous textual unit, the journey from Malta to Rome (Acts 28:11–16).

The passage is located in Rome, specifically in the private lodgings of Paul (vv. 23, 30), where he was allowed to live by himself (v. 16), and it consists of two main parts: verses 17–28 and 30–31.[10] These two parts differ from each other both in terms of their formal ordering and in terms of content. The first textual unit has two scenes (vv. 17–22 and 23–28) that give account of Paul's two meetings with the Jews living in Rome. The second unit (vv. 30–31) does

7 The text of Acts 28:17–31, with the possible exception of verse 30a, is generally recognised as a Lucan composition. Weiser, *Apostelgeschichte*, 373–374.

8 The formulation ἐνέμεινεν … ἐν ἰδίῳ μισθώματι "He remained … in his lodgings" (Acts 28:30) is an echo of μένειν καθ᾽ ἑαυτὸν "lived by himself" (v. 16). Furthermore, we can observe a peculiar correspondence in the prefixes of the verbs: εἰσήλθομεν (v. 16) and εἰσπορευομένους (v. 30).

9 There are three other such "we" passages in Acts (16:10–17; 20:5–15; 21:1–18).

10 Acts 28:29 is considered an insertion, which is found only in the manuscripts of the Occidental text, in the Vulgate: "After he had spoken, the Jews went away, arguing vigorously among themselves." Cf. *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 480. The addition looks back to the verse Acts 28:25 and emphasises the difference of Jewish opinion (which the quotation from Isaiah neglects). The reviser softened the picture of the response of the Jews. Metzger, *Commentary*, 444: "The addition was probably made because of the abrupt transition from ver. 28 to ver. 30."

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not deal with the Jews, but provides a summarising information about Paul's teaching activity (with all boldness and without hindrance). At the same time this brief closing summary constitutes the "epilogue" of the whole work.

The story about the two meetings of Paul with the Jews in Rome is skilfully composed. The remarks about the permission granted to Paul to live by himself (v. 16b) and eventually about his two full years' stay in his lodgings (v. 30) provide a frame for the passage. Each of the two scenes is characterised by a double subdivision.

The first scene gives account of Paul's meeting with the leaders of the Jews that took place shortly (v. 17: "three days later") after the arduous journey of Paul to Rome.[11] Its parts are marked by two speeches, both starting with a personal pronoun in the emphatic position: ἐγώ (v. 17b); ἡμεῖς (v. 21). In this way each protagonist introduces himself to the partner. In the first speech (vv. 17–20) Paul apologetically clarifies his situation as a prisoner in Rome. The Jews in their reaction (vv. 21–22) are fair-minded enough to invite Paul to declare his "views" to them, which provides a stimulus for a further meeting.

This meeting is narrated in the second scene (vv. 23–28), in a form similar to the first one. In the second scene, however, after the introductory description of the circumstances and the content of Paul's preaching (v. 23), the reaction of the Jews, this time ambivalent, is reported in the first place (vv. 24.25a), followed by the words of Paul in direct speech (vv. 25b–28). From the narrative point of view, this transposition – first the reaction and then the speech – has a particular reason: in this way the whole scene gains a clearly "programmatic character" that culminates in the last statement of Paul with the quotation from Isaiah (vv. 26–27) and the deduced "final conclusion"[12] (v. 28).[13]

There are some traits of parallelism between these two scenes (vv. 17–22 and 23–28), particularly at their beginnings[14] and at their ends.[15] On the basis of the parallelism between verses 22 and 28, it is possible to regard verse 28 as

11 Paul's action – making contact with the Jews – corresponds to his previous usual behaviour in Acts (cf. Acts 13:4.14; 14:1; 17:2.10.17; 18:4.19; Rom 1:16).

12 Roloff, *Apostelgeschichte*, 375.

13 Pesch, *Apostelgeschichte*, 307.

14 Vv. 17a and 23a: the time indication ("three days later" – "after they had set a day"), the arrangement of the meeting ("Paul called together the leaders of the Jews … they had gathered", "[Jews] had arranged" a day and "they came to him").

15 Vv. 22 and 28: the motif of listening (the Jews start to say: "we would like to hear [ἀκοῦσαι] from you what you think", and Paul says of the Gentiles: "they will listen" [αὐτοὶ καὶ ἀκούσονται]), the motif of acquaintance (the affirmation of the Jews: "it is known to us" [γνωστὸν ἡμῖν ἐστιν], the proclamation of Paul: "let it be known to you" [γνωστὸν οὖν ἔστω ὑμῖν], the Jews know that "this sect is denounced everywhere"; Paul wants them to know that "this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles").

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an adequate answer to the request for explanation expressed in verse 22. The intermediate verses 23–27 serve as a preparation for the final answer of Paul to the Jews in verse 28. Furthermore, it is also noteworthy to observe the correspondence between the coming and departure of "the leaders of the Jews", which is underlined by the presence of the antithesis. In verse 17 we find two compound verbs with σύν: Paul "called together" (συγκαλέσασθαι) the prominent Jews, and these "had assembled" (συνελθόντων). On the contrary, the moment of departure is described with reference to a lack of agreement among those who visited Paul: "So they disagreed with each other; and as they were leaving" (ἀσύμφωνοι δὲ ὄντες πρὸς ἀλλήλους ἀπελύοντο, v. 25a). Last but not least, it is possible to remark that from the theological point of view "the hope of Israel" is the key idea in the first scene (v. 20), whereas "testifying to the kingdom of God and trying to convince them about Jesus both from the law of Moses and from the prophets" is presented in the second scene (v. 23).

In the whole unit of verses 17–28 we can observe gradation. Both scenes reveal a developing relationship. In the first one, Paul calls together "the leaders of the Jews" (v. 17a);[16] on the other hand, in the second scene the Jews come to Paul "in great numbers" (v. 23a). Luke does not specify who these notables or dignitaries are – perhaps presidents of a synagogue, elders?[17] It is not important, because such persons represent the Jews in Rome.[18] In verse 23, however, the expression πλείονες indicates that more Jews have come to Paul than were present at the first meeting with him.[19]

In the first scene, the speech of Paul circles around his own situation (vv. 17c–20), whereas in the second one his speech has the character of proclamation (vv. 23c, 25b–28). In the first one, he is the accused, by the end of the second scene he has become the accuser, announcing judgement. In the first scene, the reaction of the Jews is still overall favourable (vv. 21–22), but in the second one their reaction is ambivalent (v. 25a): besides those who were convinced by

16 Literally "the first men (οἱ πρῶτοι) of the Jews," a designation Luke also uses for the Jerusalem leaders in Luke 19:47 and Acts 25:2. It is striking that this last encounter involves Jewish leaders who have been portrayed throughout the story as fundamentally hostile to Jesus and to the movement proclaiming him as the Messiah.

17 The leaders are here called "the first of the Jews," just as Publius on Malta was called "the first" (Acts 28:7).

18 The inscriptional evidence from Rome informs us that the ruling elders were called "gerousiarchs". See Penna, "Juifs," 329–330. Schille, *Apostelgeschichte*, 477 states that the meeting of Paul with the notable Jewish people is a sign of the meeting being on the highest level.

19 Haubeck et al., *Neuer*, 889. Barrett, *Critical*, 1243 supposes that the term πλείονες is probably elative (they came in considerable numbers) rather than comparative (more came than on the previous occasion).

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what he had said, there were also those who did not believe (v. 24). In sum, it is possible to say that the first scene appears as a narrative preparation for the second one, which has a decisive relevance.[20]

If we now focus on the second scene (vv. 23–28), it is possible to notice a certain contrast between verse 23, where Paul is depicted as giving a long exposition (ἐξετίθετο; imperfect) "from morning until evening",[21] and verse 25, where Paul's final declaration is presented as ῥῆμα ἕν "one word", which is introduced with the aorist εἰπόντος. In this way the last words of Paul in verses 25b–28, which include the quotation from Isaiah and, deduced from it, his final statement, are presented as the central part of the whole textual unit in verses 17–31.

Analogously to Acts 20:7, in Acts 28:23 Luke depicts a long-winded Paul and Luke creates the scene of the global, representative character of Paul, who tirelessly[22] presents the whole Christian kerygma to the Jews. In verse 23b Luke introduces a summary of the preaching, in which he recapitulates the content of the missionary discourses addressed to the Jews in the Book of Acts: the testimony to the kingdom of God as a content of the Christian message,[23] and the attempt to convince the audience about everything concerning Jesus, namely about the messianic function of Jesus in the history of salvation, demonstrated in his death and resurrection,[24] and understood as the fulfilment of the promise of Israel announced in Scripture.

Luke does not specify which texts "from the law of Moses and the prophets" Paul used to expound Jesus, but they were surely those pointing out the necessity of the Messiah's suffering and his resurrection – the texts Jesus set before the disciples after his resurrection (Luke 24:27.44–47), which Peter used to show Christ's messianic status to the Jews in the temple square at Pentecost (Acts 2:17–36; 3:12–26) and which Paul himself expounded in the synagogue at Antioch of Pisidia (Acts 13:32–39).

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20 Zmijewski, *Apostelgeschichte*, 880.

21 The phrase "from morning until evening" comes from LXX (3 Kgs 22:35; cf. Ex 18:13; Sir 18:26). Schnabel, *Acts*, 1071 supposes: "Since the meeting is described as lasting the entire day, it is possible that it took place on a Sabbath day, when the Jews would have the time to meet with Paul for several hours, listening to the exposition of Scripture presented by a rabbinically trained believer in Jesus and discussing theological questions."

22 Schille, *Apostelgeschichte*, 479.

23 Delling, "Letzte," 194.

24 The announcement of βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ as the overall Christian message appears in Acts 1:3; 19:8; 20:25. The message of "kingdom" is associated with the proclamation about Jesus in Acts 8:12; 28:31.

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In Acts 28:24 Luke also generalises the reaction of those who are present. The proclamation of the Christian kerygma causes division[25] among the Jews, as was already prophesied by Simeon (Luke 2:34) – some being convinced, others refusing to believe.[26] It is difficult to know whether the expression "some were convinced" means the same thing as saying "some embraced faith" (cf. Acts 17:4)[27] or whether it concerns only the theoretical discussion among the Jews about the arguments put forward by Paul.[28] It is necessary to say that nowhere in Acts do we find a statement about the total rejection of the Christian message on the part of the Jews. The response to the preaching about Jesus in Acts is always mixed.[29] Luke strives to show that the Christian message is a sign of contradiction that causes division. Acts 28:25a shows that at the close of the meeting the Jews disagreed each other.

The disagreement among the Jews in Rome is representative of the behaviour of Israel towards the message of salvation. It consists in a division in Israel with regard to the messianic question.[30] This statement about the lack of agreement (ἀσύμφωνοι)[31] among the Jews has a double effect; on the one hand, it demonstrates that there are still Jews who respond positively to the message about Jesus.[32] On the other hand, this discord among the Jews stands in sharp contrast to the unity (expressed with the term ὁμοθυμαδόν "with one mind", that characterises the followers of Jesus.[33] The statement about disagreement among the Jews, which implies long disputation among them, stands in sharp contrast to the ensuing speech of Paul, which is characterised by uniformity

25 The formulation οἱ μὲν … οἱ δὲ also occurs in Acts 14:4 and 17:32. In all three of these texts this expression refers to the split reaction to the Christian message.

26 The verb ἀπιστέω, which means "disbelieve, refuse to believe", apart from our text, Acts 28:24, occurs in Luke-Acts only twice, in the resurrection narrative (Luke 24:11.41).

27 So Jervell, *Apostelgeschichte*, 626.

28 Pervo, *Acts*, 681 states: "Although some of the Roman Jews found his message persuasive (28:24), and one can presume that some Gentiles did also (28:30–31), no baptisms are reported and no house-based churches are established. Paul functions like a philosopher who accepts any and all who care to attend his lectures."

29 Cf. Acts 2:12–13; 4:1–4; 5:12–17; 6:8–14; 9:21–25; 13:42–45; 14:1–2; 17:1–5; 18:4.12–17; 19:8–10.

30 The fact that Jesus will be a cause of διαμερισμός "division" was already highlighted in the Gospel of Luke (Luke 12:51; differently in Matt 10:34: μάχαιρα "sword").

31 The adjective ἀσύμφωνος "not harmonious, in disagreement" appears only here in the New Testament, much like the opposite adjective σύμφωνος "agreeing", which also makes only a single appearance in the New Testament (1 Cor 7:5).

32 Cf. Acts 2:12–13; 4:1–4; 5:12–17; 6:8–14; 9:21–25; 13:42–45; 17:1–5; 18:4, 12–17; 19:8–10.

33 Cf. Acts 1:14; 2:46; 4:24; 5:12; 15:25. With respect to the idea of unity as a sign of a superior community, and discord as the mark of a failing community, see Parsons, *Acts*, 364.

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and unambiguity. He utters only ῥῆμα ἕν "one word", i.e. a brief speech,[34] which stands in contrast to the long-winded exposition implied in the verse 23. This "one word" – which, for Luke, is encouragement, promise, confidence rooted in God, and its fulfilment[35] – can be understood as the quintessence of the whole book of the Acts of the Apostles.[36]

The final speech of Paul (vv. 25b–28), which gives the impression of being addressed to the larger audience that is mentioned in the narrative, consists of two parts (vv. 25b–27 and v. 28) with antithetical structure. The first part includes the quotation from Isaiah 6:9–10, which emphasises the idea of the inability to listen (the verb ἀκούω is the only expression in the quotation that occurs three times): this people will listen, but not understand (v. 26), they hardly hear (v. 27a), they may not hear (v. 27b). Contrary to this Old Testament quotation, in the second part the proclamation (v. 28) it is said of the Gentiles: "they will listen" (αὐτοὶ καὶ ἀκούσονται).

The Old Testament text is introduced with a particular emphasis. The use of the adverb καλῶς (NAB: "well"; NIB: "the truth") in the introductory phrase suggests that the quotation from Scripture includes a sense that it alone is believed to have. Moreover, it specifies that the subject of the promise is actually not Isaiah, but the Holy Spirit: the eulogy καλῶς ἐλάλησεν is not directed to the human mediator, but to the divine originator.[37] The reference to the Holy Spirit not only confirms the inspiration of the prophet, but also specifies that the truth expressed to "your forefathers" remains valid at the present time. In every instance in Acts where a quotation from Scripture is introduced by a reference to the Spirit, the Spirit is described as having spoken.[38]

We can notice that at this point Paul starts to "dissociate" himself from the unbelieving Jews. In verse 17 he addressed them as "brothers" (literally: "men, brothers"; ἄνδρες ἀδελφοί),[39] which reveals an intimate and hearty

34 The term ῥῆμα does not relate only to the quotation from the Old Testament, but to the whole closing speech of Paul.

35 Bovon, "'Schön'," 230–231.

36 Hauser, *Strukturen*, 34.

37 Bovon, "'Schön'," 231.

38 Cf. Acts 1:16; 4:25, where the Spirit is said to speak through David, reputedly the author of the Psalms. Acts 1:16 quotes Psalm 69(68):26 and Psalm 109(108):8 to justify the betrayal of Judas. And Acts 4:25 quotes Psalm 2:1–2 to justify the death of the Messiah. These two texts were also very important for Luke.

39 The association of ἄνδρες with another noun in apposition was a common mode of address in Greek oratory: ἄνδρες Ἀθηναῖοι (Demosthenes, *Olynthiac* 1.1; Lysias, *Or*. 6.8); ἄνδρες Ἰσραηλῖται "Israelites" (Josephus, *Ant*. 3,189). See Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 222–223.

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relationship.[40] Now he speaks of "your" forefathers (v. 25b). Paul had not ceased to be a Jew (v. 17: he observes the customs of the Jewish ancestors), but now he separates himself from those Jews who had rejected God's word through the prophet Isaiah, who had opposed the Spirit in the past, and whose descendants were now doing the same. The obstinacy that Stephen reproached in the leading Jews in Jerusalem (Acts 7:51–53) is now seen in the leading Jews in Rome.

In verses 26–27 Luke puts in Paul's mouth the words of God, addressed to Isaiah in the context of his calling and indicating the outcome of his mission to Israel: his preaching will be met with misunderstanding on the part of the people.

The cited passage of Isa 6:9–10 agrees with the Septuagint (LXX), except for some small differences.[41] The formulation "Go to this people and say" in Acts 28:26 is slightly different from LXX, which has "Go and say to this people". The modification in verse 26 appears to be influenced by the wording in Isa 6:8. This modification is not to give "a more missionary tone to the command,"[42] but it rather highlights that the people to be addressed are God's people, Israel, and not the nations.[43] More significantly, LXX and the Acts quotation differ from the Masoretic text. The imperatives "keep listening, but do not comprehend" (שִׁמְעוּ שָׁמוֹעַ וְאַל־תָּבִינוּ) and "keep looking, but do not understand" (וּרְאוּ רָאוֹ וְאַל־תֵּדָעוּ) in the Masoretic Text of Is 6:9 are changed to the emphatic future indicatives "you will indeed listen, but never understand" (ἀκοῇ ἀκούσετε καὶ οὐ μὴ συνῆτε) and "you will indeed look, but never see" (βλέποντες βλέψετε καὶ οὐ μὴ ἴδητε), which express what will happen. The cognate dative ἀκοῇ and the cognate participle βλέποντες are used to represent the Hebrew infinitive absolute, which has the effect of intensifying the meaning of the verb.[44] In LXX (and the Acts) reading of Is 6:10, the command that Isaiah has to carry out (expressed in the imperative) "make the mind of this people dull, and stop their ears, and shut their eyes" is changed to a statement of fact (expressed in the indicative past) "the mind of this people has grown dull, and their ears are hard of hearing, and they have shut their eyes", so that the induration is no longer presented as wanted by God, but as caused by the people.

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40 See also other points in Acts (2:29; 3:17; 7:2; 13:26.38; 22:1; 23:1.6) where a Jewish Christian addresses Jews as "brothers". It is noteworthy that the address "brothers" is never used in Acts in connection with Gentiles.

41 More detailed study of the various versions of Isa 6:9–10 is offered in the chapter "A Strange Mission of Isa 6:9–10" of this book.

42 Palmer, "Mission," 66.

43 Peterson, *Acts*, 716.

44 See Zerwick, *Graecitas*, § 61; Blass et al., *Grammatik*, § 198,6 n. 9.

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Although the quotation in Acts 28:26 agrees substantially with LXX, it is not possible to say whether Luke took the text directly from LXX or whether it was part of some collection of *testimonia*. The text of Isa 6:9–10 LXX is used also on other places in the New Testament. It is paraphrased by Paul in Rom 11:8, and alluded to in Mark 4:12 and John 12:40.[45] A full quotation occurs in Matt 13:44–45. It is characteristic of Luke that he makes only a brief allusion to it in the Gospel story, which was related only to the first rejection of Jesus (Luke 8:10), and he saves its full quotation until the end of Acts, when every effort had been made to "visit the people" (cf. Luke 1:68.78; 7:16) through the proclamation of the risen Jesus. It is remarkable that in the New Testament Luke alone quotes Is 6:9a and so applies the text directly to the unbelieving Israel in relation to the preaching of Paul. The quoted words "Go to this people and say" (Acts 28:26a) relate Paul to the commission given to the prophet. This may remind the readers of Acts of the repeated references to the calling of Paul formulated in the language of the prophetic callings (cf. Acts 9:15; 22:21; 26:17).

In the original context, God commands Isaiah to tell the people to go on behaving as apostates who hear God's word but who neither understand nor obey it. Their stubbornness is so great that they will not escape judgement (Isa 6:9–10). It is only after God's judgement has run its course that there can be any hope of renewal (Isa 6:11–13). Judgement, therefore, is not God's final word for the Jewish people. In the context of Acts 28:23–28, Paul declares that God has given him the same order as the prophet Isaiah, which implies that the conduct of the people and their response to God's word has not changed since Isaiah's time. Paul, by means of the prophecy of Isaiah, warns his audience that the nation of Israel is falling into the pattern of not believing and of hardheartedness. We can see that this blindness/obstinacy refers to the people of Israel as a whole, and not just to a group of individuals – λαός is used with emphasis in the quotation from Isaiah both in the introduction (Acts 28:26a: πορεύθητι πρὸς τὸν λαὸν τοῦτον καὶ εἰπόν) and in the oracle itself (Acts 28:27a: ἐπαχύνθη γὰρ ἡ καρδία τοῦ λαοῦ τούτου). It thus emphasises the contrast between the inability of the λαός to listen (v. 27) and the ability and willingness of the Gentiles to listen (v. 28: τὰ ἔθνη), without implying a totality in the numerical sense, nor excluding the possibility that some Jews did believe or might still believe.

In verse 28 Paul closes his speech with a solemn statement that can be considered as his testament and which has the character of prophecy.[46] The "salvation"[47] that comes from God, that was announced by the prophets, and

45 Cf. also Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 12.2; 33.1; 69.4.

46 Eckey, *Apostelgeschichte*, 592.

47 In the Lukan double work, the term σωτήριον is also used in Luke 2:30; 3:6 (= Isa 40:5).

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that is the source of hope for Israel, became present in Jesus and is communicated in the Word proclaimed by the apostles, and is destined by God for the nations, that is to say for the Gentiles. For the third and climactic time, Paul announces a turn to the Gentiles – the first two announcements were in Acts 13:46; 18:6. It is necessary to keep in view that it is not said that "this salvation of God" *will be* sent to the Gentiles, but that it *has been* sent. The verb ἀπεστάλη is in aorist; this past tense refers to the coming of Jesus, whose universal destination was announced at the beginning of the Gospel: "a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel" (Luke 2:32). The mission to the Gentiles must not be understood as a consequence of the rejection of the Jews. This rejection, as well as the entry of the Gentiles into the church, is seen as a fulfilment of Scripture. These two things do not explain each other mutually, but both are explained from the design of God, which was manifested by the prophets.[48] The verse 28, however, indicates that the separation of the church from Israel is complete. From now on, the church becomes a Gentile church.[49]

As in the original context of Isaiah, so for Luke this divine indictment of Israel's obstinacy is not God's final word, in the sense that from that point the Jews will always be unwilling and unable to repent and turn to God. The concluding verses 30–31 are not related to the life and death of Paul, but they should be regarded as a testimony about the rise and spread of the gospel and the Christianity to which that gospel gave birth. In the verse 30 Paul is portrayed as welcoming all who came to visit him. The word πᾶς is very important for Luke, and it is no accident that he uses it also to end the Book of Acts. He wants to emphasise that the gospel message continued to be for everyone – "all individuals";[50] this includes Jews and Gentiles, whether believers or unbelievers, men, women, free-born and slaves,[51] but the movement from verse 28 to verse 30 gives preference to the Gentiles. Here we find a sign of the end of one epoch, the end of the salvific priority which had been accorded to Israel.[52] The short epilogue (vv. 30–31), with which Luke concludes his work, depicts the permanent situation of the Christian community and of the mission of the Church (in the person of Paul): the mission, now released from the synagogue,

48 Dupont, "Conclusion," 403.

49 Mussner, "Erzählintention," 37.

50 So Dupont, "Conclusion," 376–380; see also e.g. Gnilka, *Verstockung*, 154; Schneider, *Apostelgeschichte*, 419.

51 Schnabel, *Acts*, 1076; cf. also e.g. Marguerat, *Actes*, 387. On the contrary, Haenchen, *Apostelgeschichte*, 694 suggests that receiving all visitors refers to the Gentiles. So also e.g. Jervell, *Apostelgeschichte*, 630.

52 Wolter, "Lukanische," 253–284, especially 266–268.

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from the priority given to the Jewish people,[53] and opened to the nations, but without closing the door to the individual Jews who turn to the gospel.

3 Acts 28:17–31 as the Climax of Luke-Acts

The conclusion of the Book of Acts (28:17–31), as already stated above, is characterised by incompleteness. The author of Acts leaves off his story of Paul at an unexpected point. This does not, of course, mean that Acts is "incomplete", any more than Homer's *Iliad* is incomplete for not depicting Achilles' death.[54] Luke's use of "narrative suspension" corresponds to ancient models and allows him to accentuate major themes.[55] In Greek historiography we can find numerous works with an open ending, e.g. Herodotus (*Histories* 9.114–120), Thucydides (*History of the Peloponnesian War* 8.109). An example from Latin literature would be the Roman poet Virgil (*Aeneid* 12.950–952). There are also instances of an open ending in Jewish historiography: 2 Kgs 25:27–30; 2 Chr 36:23; 2 Macc 15:37.[56]

That narrative suspension allows Luke to emphatically reiterate his primary themes. That Luke's conclusion returns to earlier themes in his work and resumes them is not surprising.[57] A closing summary was not only common in speeches and rhetorical essays (e.g. Aeschines, *Contra Timarchus* 177; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *De Thucydide* 55; *De Demosthene* 32; Cicero, *Pro Quinctio* 19.60), but can also be found in books of history (e.g. Polybius, *Historiai* 2.71.7–10, esp. 7–8) and philosophical essays (Cicero, *De finibus* 5,32,95–96).[58] The concluding section of Acts recapitulates many of Luke's most prominent themes in Luke-Acts.

The conclusion of the Acts has connections with the whole of the rest of the book, in fact, with the whole double work Luke-Acts. With good reason, therefore, this ending functions as an *anakephalaiôsis*, that is, a summary of

53 The choice of the verb εἰσπορεύομαι "come" (Acts 28:30) indicates a spontaneous coming in contrast to συγκαλέω "call together" (Acts 28:17). This difference reflects the new situation after the breakup with Judaism.

54 Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 792.

55 Cf. Marguerat, "'Et quand'," 5–11; Marguerat, "Enigma," 304; see also Baum, "Rhetorik," 106–112.

56 In 2 Kgs 25:27–30 is suspended the account about Jehoiachin, King of Judah, who is released from prison in Babylon. 2 Chr 36:23 mentions Cyrus, who proclaims liberty for the exiles but without informing us about the execution of his decree. 2 Macc 15:37 concludes a narrative about Judah Maccabee without referring to his violent death.

57 *Inclusio* can cover entire books (e.g. John 1:1; 20:28; Matt 1:23; 28:20).

58 Cf. Keener, *Acts*, 3715–3716.

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the main arguments of the work.[59] Acts 28:17–31 brings together all the major issues of Luke-Acts. The multiplicity of literary and thematic inclusions is truly impressive.

3.1 *Recapitulation and Conclusion of the Trial of Paul*

First and foremost, the concluding section of Acts revisits some themes developed during Paul's defence in Acts. The first part of the conclusion (Acts 28:17–22) offers a sort of recapitulation of the whole history of Paul's trial (Acts 21–26).

Paul starts to speak out in defence of himself (vv. 17–20) with the assertion that he has done nothing against his people or their ancestral customs (cf. Acts 28:17c). This statement refers to the accusation against Paul by the Jews from Asia at the moment of his arrest: "This is the man who is teaching everyone everywhere against our people, our law, and this place" (Acts 21:28; cf. 21:21, where we find similar accusations from Judaeo-Christians). The affirmation of Paul's adherence to Judaism is constant in Acts (22:3; 23:6; 24:14ff; 26:4ff). We may notice that the charge of betraying the Law and the customs of the fathers[60] (Acts 21:21.28; 25:8) levelled against Paul is constant too.

Paul's statement that "I was arrested in Jerusalem and handed over to the Romans" (Acts 28:17d) corresponds to the prophecy of Agabus (Acts 21:11), but not to the facts: Paul was grabbed by the Jews and rescued by the Romans, but he was still arrested. This allows the understanding that he was "handed over" to the ruling power (by his Jewish opponents in the temple). It seems likely that the author of Acts wants to align the fate of Paul with the fate of Jesus (Luke 9:44; 18:32; cf. 24:7).

In verse 18 Paul says of the Romans in his defence: "When they had examined me, they wanted to release me, because there was no reason for the death penalty in my case." In the trial of Paul we find repeated declarations of the innocence of Paul: Claudius Lysias, a Roman official in Jerusalem, states in his letter to the governor Felix: "I found that he was accused concerning questions of their law, but was charged with nothing deserving death or imprisonment" (Acts 23:29). Festus, Procurator of Palestine, speaking to King Agrippa II, asserts: "I found that he had done nothing deserving death" (Acts 25:25); the King is of the same opinion (Acts 26:31–32). In this way the Romans play the role that they also played in the case of Jesus (Luke 23:4.14–15.22).

59 Aletti, *Racconto*, 157.

60 The adjective πατρῷος occurs in the NT only in the final chapters of Acts (altogether three times: Acts 22:3; 24:14; 28:17), which refer to the history of the trial of Paul (Acts 21–28). In Acts 24:14 πατρῷος appears in the appellation of God ("the God of our ancestors"); in Acts 22:3 it relates to the law, and likewise in Acts 28:17 it is connected with the customs.

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Thereafter Paul states that when the Jerusalem authorities objected to his release, he appealed to the emperor (v. 19). The appeal to the emperor, however, was not to accuse the Jews but to defend himself. Paul shows himself as being conciliatory; he forgets that the Jews are setting a trap for him, and he says nothing about the reason for his appeal to the emperor (the refusal to come before the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem; cf. Acts 25:9–10). He would like to convince the Jews in Rome about his affection for the people of Israel.

In his final statement Paul says that he is a prisoner tried for "the hope of Israel" (v. 20), that is, for the sake of the common expectation of the fulfilment of the divine promises which were announced in the Scriptures. This faith also binds Paul with the Jews. The theme of "the hope of Israel" has already appeared three times in the history of the trial of Paul (Acts 23:6; 24:15; 26:6–8), where it referred to the eschatological faith in the resurrection. In Acts 28:20 it lacks qualification. Apart from Acts 21–26, the idea of "the hope of Israel" is not so clearly defined, acting as the message of resurrection (see Luke 2:25–38; 23:51; 24:21).

In their answer to Paul's defence in Acts 28:21–22, the Jews use a noteworthy expression αἵρεσις (v. 22) for the Christian movement. It may refer to the trial of Paul at Caesarea, where Paul was accused by Tertullus of being "a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes" (Acts 24:5) and where Paul defended himself with the words: "I admit to you that, according to the Way, which they call a sect (κατὰ τὴν ὁδὸν ἣν λέγουσιν αἵρεσιν), I worship the God of our ancestors, believing everything laid down according to the law or written in the prophets" (Acts 24:14).

The comparison with the narrative about Paul's trial (Acts 21–26) shows that we can regard Acts 28:17–22 as a recapitulation of the whole history of the trial, in which the loyalty of Paul to his people and the obstinacy of his adversaries are highlighted.

3.2 *Recapitulation and Conclusion of the Ministry of Paul*

The final section of Acts, presenting Paul preaching in Rome, can be considered both as a recapitulation of the ministry of Paul and its conclusion. We can especially observe that Paul's preaching in Rome resembles his first sermon in Antioch of Pisidia (Acts 13:14–41.42–49), which is generally considered to be the inauguration of the ministry of Paul.[61]

61 In the first mention of the missionary activity of Paul in Acts 9:20–25, we find Paul preaching in the synagogue in Damascus. Already on this occasion it is possible to observe a two-stage pattern: the preaching of Paul caused astonishment to the Jewish hearers

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In both cases the recipients of the preaching are Jews and in both cases there are two encounters on two different days (cf. Acts 13:42: "on the next Sabbath"; 28:23: "they arranged a day"). The initiative for the first meeting comes from Paul (Acts 13:14; 28:17), whereas the initiative for the second one comes from the Jews (Acts 13:42; 28:23). In both cases the first meeting ends with a request to hear more from Paul (Acts 13:42; 28:22) and in both cases there are more attendees at the second meeting (Acts 13:44; 28:23). In both sermons, Paul mentions "the law of Moses" and "the prophets" (Acts 13:38–40; 28:23). The long sermon of Paul in Acts 13:16–41 can be related to the temporal reference "from morning until evening" in Acts 28:23. The sermon of Paul in Antioch of Pisidia terminates with a menacing admonition that includes a quotation from Habakkuk 1:5 (Acts 13:41). This quotation has a similar function to the quotation from Isa 6:9–10 in Acts 28:26–27, which also has an admonitory character and which contains an indictment. In both cases the less successful second meeting ends with an announcement that the Gentiles will be given an opportunity to respond (Acts 13:46–47; 28:28).[62] Finally, we can see that although Paul proclaimed in Antioch of Pisidia that "it is to us that this message of salvation has been sent" (Acts 13:26: ἡμῖν ὁ λόγος τῆς σωτηρίας ταύτης ἐξαπεστάλη), in Rome he announced that "this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles" (Acts 28:28: τοῖς ἔθνεσιν ἀπεστάλη τοῦτο τὸ σωτήριον τοῦ θεοῦ).[63] The remarkable extension of salvation to the Gentiles is in accordance with God's ancient promise (cf. Acts 13:46–47).[64]

When Paul turned to the Gentiles in Antioch of Pisidia (Acts 13:46) and in Corinth (Acts 18:6), he did not give up on the Jews – not in these two cities, let alone in other cities. Paul continued to preach in the synagogues of the towns that he visited.[65] It is possible to observe that Paul was met with a negative reaction by the Jews in the beginning (Acts 13:44–52), in the middle (Acts 18:5–11), and at the end (Acts 28:23–28) of his missionary activity. It means that he experienced rejection in all the main missionary areas – Asia Minor, Greece, and Italy. The reports about all three of these episodes contain three important

(Acts 9:20–22); later on, the Jews conspired to kill him (Acts 9:23–25). Later on, there is a short report about Paul's missionary activity in Cyprus (Acts 13:6–12).

62 Cf. Dupont, "Conclusion," 384–385. See also Gnilka, *Verstockung*, 147.

63 Acts 13:26 and 28:28 are the only places in Luke-Acts where the word "salvation" appears with the demonstrative pronoun.

64 In both accounts (Acts 13:14–49; Acts 28:17–31) we find the quotation from Isaiah. In Acts 13:47 there is a mention of Isa 49:6, which emphasises the divine mandate to the Gentiles, while in Acts 28:26–27 Is 6:9–10 is cited, which highlights the rejection by the Jews of God's message with its messenger.

65 Cf. Acts 14:1: Iconium; 17:1: Thessalonica; 17:10: Beroea; 17:17: Athens; 18:4: Corinth; 19:8: Ephesus.

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elements: the Jews resist and blaspheme against the word of God (the stubbornness of the Jews is always briefly mentioned); the apostle utters the admonitory word (in Antioch of Pisidia and Corinth an admonitory gesture is also mentioned: shaking off the dust – this depends on the word of the Lord in Luke 9:5); the apostle announces that from now on he will turn to the Gentiles.

Preaching to Jews continued wherever possible, but Paul took the message to Gentiles whenever Jews rejected it.[66] The rejection of the Jews, as well as the entry of the Gentiles into the church, is seen as a fulfilment of Scripture (cf. Acts 13:46–47). The declarations in Acts 13:26 and 28:28 form an inclusion. This *inclusio* supports the view that chapters 13–28 are the second major part of Acts. Chapters 1–12 narrate the spread of the gospel from Jerusalem to Antioch and Peter is depicted as the central character, while chapters 13–28 describe the proclamation of the gospel as it proceeds from Antioch to Rome, and the main character is Paul.

3.3 *Conclusion of the Book of Acts*

The concluding section Acts 28:17–31 also presents some parallels with the introductory section of Acts (1:1–8),[67] and so these two texts function as an *inclusio* covering the whole book. The scheme of an ending recalling the beginning was quite common in the literature of the time.[68]

We can shortly recount the resemblances between Acts 1:1–8 and 28:17–31. Both the beginning (Acts 1:1) and the end (Acts 28:31) focus on the activity of teaching. By framing the narrative with references to teaching, the narrator has highlighted the parallel activities of Jesus and Paul; however, in Acts 28, Jesus is no longer the teacher but the subject matter, no longer the proclaimer but the proclaimed. Moreover, in both the introductory and concluding sections of Acts we find the theme of "bearing witness to" (Acts 1:8: μάρτυς;[69] 28:23: διαμαρτύρομαι[70]), which is one of the central motifs of the Acts of the Apostles.

We can also see that the Holy Spirit is actively involved in the pronouncements of Jesus (Acts 1:2) and Paul (Acts 28:25). The foretold empowering of the

66 According to the testimony of the Acts, the attitude of the Jews to the Christian message was not the same everywhere. The Jews in Berea were more receptive than those in Thessalonica, for they welcomed the message eagerly (Acts 17:11).

67 Cf. Puskas, *Conclusion*, 82–86.

68 Josephus does not conclude his *Jewish Antiquities* with anything that fulfils what he promised at beginning of the work (20,261).

69 The noun μάρτυς is used 35 times in the New Testament. The largest number of occurrences is in the Acts: altogether 13 times (1:8.22; 2:32; 3:15; 5:32; 6:13; 7:58; 10:39.41; 13:31; 22:15.20; 26:16).

70 The verb διαμαρτύρομαι, which occurs 15 times in the whole of the New Testament, is used nine times in Acts (2:40; 8:25; 10:42; 18:5; 20:21.23.24; 23:11; 28:23).

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disciples by the Holy Spirit for missionary activity (Acts 1:5.8) is assumed in Acts 28.

Furthermore, in both texts, Acts 1:1–8 and 28:17–31, we find a reference to "the kingdom of God" (ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ: Acts 1:3; 28:23.31). We can observe that the preaching of "the kingdom of God" is, apart from Acts 1:3, where it refers to Jesus, and Acts 8:12, where it relates to Philip, always connected with Paul (Acts 14:22; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23.31).

In Acts 1:6 the question of the disciples about the time when Jesus will restore the kingdom to Israel may correspond to the expression "the hope of Israel" in Acts 28:20 and the answer of Jesus, starting with the negative formulation "it is not for you to know the times and periods …" (οὐχ ὑμῶν ἐστιν γνῶναι …: Acts 1:7), is in contrast to the final statement of Paul: γνωστὸν οὖν ἔστω ὑμῖν "let it be known to you" (Acts 28:28). Moreover, the concluding words of Paul, "this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles" (Acts 28:28), corresponds to the last words of Jesus in Acts: "you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8).[71] The formulation "the ends of the earth" in Acts 1:8 is an echo of the prophecy of Isaiah: "I will give you as a light to the nations that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth." (Isa 49:6), which is quoted by Paul in Antioch of Pisidia (Acts 13:47).[72]

In both scenes the idea of "remaining" is emphasised: in Acts 1:4 the apostles must not depart from Jerusalem, but they have to "wait" (περιμένειν), and in Acts 28:30 Paul remained (ἐνέμεινεν) in his lodgings for two whole years. We notice that the book of the Acts of the Apostles begins (Acts 1:12–14) and ends in a house (Acts 28:30–31), whereas the Gospel of Luke began (Luke 1:8–22) and ended (Luke 24:53) in the temple.

Finally, Acts 28:17–31 can be regarded as the conclusion of the whole book of the Acts of the Apostles, because the programme of the missionary work formulated in Acts 1:8 was completed with the arrival of Paul in Rome (Luke 24:47). The Christian kerygma reached the heart of the empire and so in this way the conditions were created for it to reach the ends of the earth.

3.4 *Conclusion of the Double Work Luke-Acts*

We have demonstrated that Acts 28:17–31 is a recapitulation and conclusion/finale of the ministry of Paul by referring to the similarities between this

71 In Acts 1:8 the missionary programme is expressed by means of four expressions, whereas in Luke 24:47 it is formulated in a more succinct way by means of two expressions: the missionary proclamation is addressed to "all nations, beginning from Jerusalem".

72 Dupont, "Conclusion," 390.

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concluding scene and the inaugural preaching of Paul in Antioch of Pisidia (Acts 13:14–49). In order to show that the closing section of Acts forms a good conclusion for the whole double work Luke-Acts, we will point out that this passage recalls numerous key points both in the opening of Jesus' Galilean teaching in the synagogue at Nazareth (Luke 4:16–30) and in the introductory chapters of Luke (Luke 1–2).

Jesus' teaching in the synagogue at Nazareth (Luke 4:16–30), which inaugurates his public ministry in Galilee (Luke 4:14–9:50), is preceded by the preparatory part of the Gospel (Luke 3:1–4:13), in which the main role is played by John the Baptist. We can see that the self-introduction of Jesus by relating the prophecy of Isaiah 61:1–2 to himself (Luke 4:18–21) corresponds to his presentation by John the Baptist, which is also based on Old Testament prophecy, specifically Isa 40:3–5 (Luke 3:4–6). We find here the parallel between John the Baptist and Jesus that was characteristic already for the infancy narrative (Luke 1:5–2:52). In Luke 4:18–19 Jesus introduces himself as the saviour of all poor, feeble, and ostracised people, whereas in Luke 3:6 John the Baptist speaks of him as "the salvation of God" for "all flesh". By means of the two OT prophetic texts, Jesus is presented as a saviour of universal significance. This view corresponds to the final word of Paul in Acts, where, in his preaching about the kingdom of God and his teaching about Jesus, he proclaims: "this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles" (Acts 28:28). The formula "this salvation of God" (τὸ σωτήριον τοῦ θεοῦ) occurs only here and in Luke 3:6, where it is quoted from Isa 40:5. Thus, at the end of his two-volume testimony to the Christ-event, Luke sums up the universal character of salvation in Christ, which was echoed throughout the whole work.[73]

There are still more similarities between Acts 28:17–31 and Luke 4:16–30. Both scenes start with an indication of location and time (Luke 4:16; Acts 28:16.23). In both stories the hearers of the gospel message are Jews (Luke 4:16; Acts 28:17.23). Both texts are divided into two scenes, the first one with a positive response and the second one showing rejection and referring to the Gentile mission (Luke 4:16–22.23–30; Acts 28:17–22.23–28): at first, the Jewish hearers are politely interested (Luke 4:22; Acts 28:22), but subsequently they give a negative response to the gospel message (Luke 4:28; Acts 28:24–25) and the Gentiles are presented as recipients of God's favour (Luke 4:25–27; Acts 28:28).

Both events are interpreted as a fulfilment of Scripture, represented in both cases by a quotation from Isaiah.[74] Jesus at the beginning of his ministry in Luke 4:18–19 quotes Isa 61:1–2, Paul at the end of his ministry in Acts 28:26–27

73 Cf. Luke 2:11.14.30–32; 3:6; 4:24–27; 24:47; Acts 1:8; 10:1–11:18; 13:47; 28:28.

74 Cf. Puskas, *Conclusion*, 91–96; see also Neirynck, "Luke," 357–395, especially 387–395.

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quotes Isa 6:9–10. It is noteworthy that these quotations come in reversed order than they have in the book of the Old Testament prophet: first the uplifting message of salvation, the gloomy calling of the prophet at the end. Nevertheless, as we have seen, this latter quotation is interpreted by Paul in the following verse (Acts 28:28): it only means that "this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles".

The closing section of Acts also recalls numerous key points of the introductory chapters of Luke (Luke 1:5–2:52). First, both textual units contain references to the *Holy Spirit* speaking through prophets (Luke 1:67: Zechariah; Luke 2:25–27: Simeon; Acts 28:25: Isaiah) – this phenomenon, however, appears throughout the whole double work.

Second, in both texts *opposition* to Christ and his followers is expressed by the verb ἀντιλέγω "speak against, contradict; oppose, be obstinate" (Luke 2:34 and Acts 28:19, 22).

In the double work Luke-Acts this verb occurs on several other places. In Luke 20:27 it is in the context of the denial of the resurrection by the Sadducees (differently in Mark 12:18) and in Luke 21:15 it describes defiance predicted by Jesus to the disciples in his eschatological speech (differently in Mark 13:11 and Mt 10:19–20). In Acts 4:14 it appears in connection with bringing Peter and John before the Sanhedrin, and in Acts 13:45 it describes the moment of turnover in the encounter of Paul with the Jews in Antioch of Pisidia. The whole double work of Luke is delimited with the motif of resistance; πανταχοῦ ἀντιλέγεται "everywhere it is spoken against" in Acts 28:22 corresponds to σημεῖον ἀντιλεγόμενον "a sign that will be opposed" in Luke 2:34. We can observe that both Jesus and Paul were called to be "a light to the Gentiles" (Luke 2:32; Acts 13:47) and because of this they were both rejected by their co-religionists.

Third, in both textual units we can find the announcement of *salvation* (σωτήριον), which also includes the Gentiles. While Luke usually uses the term σωτηρία ("salvation, deliverance"),[75] in the introductory chapters (Luke 1–3) and his concluding chapter (Acts 28) we find the expression σωτήριον, which is characteristic of the Greek version of Deutero- and Trito-Isaiah.[76] The neuter substantive adjective τό σωτήριον describes both salvation and the bearer of salvation; apart from the Lukan double work it occurs in the New Testament

75 Cf. Luke 1:69.71.77; 19:9; Acts 4:12; 7:25; 13:26.47; 16:17; 27:34.

76 Cf. Isa 40:5; 51:5.6.8; 56:1; 59:17; 60:6.18; 61:10; 62:1; 63:1; see also Ps 66:3; 97:3 LXX.

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only in Ephesians 6:17 (echoing is Isa 59:17).[77] For the author of Luke-Acts, however, this term is crucially important and forms a framework for the whole double work. The quotation from Isaiah 40:5 uttered by John the Baptist at the beginning of the Gospel narrative in Luke 3:6, where he declares that "all flesh shall see *the salvation of God* (τὸ σωτήριον τοῦ θεοῦ)", forms an inclusion with Acts 28:28, where Paul, after his arrival in Rome, is presented as proclaiming that "this *salvation of God* (τὸ σωτήριον τοῦ θεοῦ) has been sent to the Gentiles". As we have seen, this is Luke's peculiar interpretation of the enigmatic passage Isa 6:9–10. The last occurrence of τό σωτήριον is in Luke 2:30, which, together with Luke 2:32, echoes Isaiah 40:5.

Finally, we can see that the idea of *fulfilment*, which was already stated in Luke 1:1 as a chief characteristic of both the Gospel narrative[78] and the Acts,[79] is again expressed through the quotation from Isaiah 6:9–10. The idea of God's plan of salvation is a basis of the necessity which is expressed frequently in Luke-Acts with the impersonal verb δεῖ "it is necessary".[80]

4 Conclusions

Although the story about Paul seems to end relatively abruptly with the scene in Acts 28:17–31, Luke has given in it a powerful and effective finale to his book.

The passage is skilfully composed, with a clear climactic structure in which the last words of Paul in verses 25b–28, which include the quotation of Isaiah 6:9–10 and his final statement (v. 28), create the pivotal part of this whole textual unit. On the one hand, by means of the prophecy of Isaiah Paul alerts the listeners that the nation of Israel is falling into a national pattern of not believing and hardheartedness. And on the other hand, he communicates in his final statement, with the character of a will or testament, that salvation is directed by God to the Gentiles. The rejection of the Christian message by the Jews, as well as the Gentiles embracing the faith, is seen as the fulfilment of Scripture. A brief epilogue (vv. 30–31), which follows after the final words of Paul, portrays the permanent situation of the Church and her missionary work: a mission away from the synagogue, away from the priority of the Jewish

77 Pervo, *Acts*, 686: "This is an indication of the strong interest in Isaiah 40–66 in the post-Pauline environment."

78 πληρόω ("fulfil"): Luke 1:20; 4:21; 9:31; 21:24; 22:16; 24:44; συμπληρόω ("be fulfilled"): Luke 9,51.

79 πληρόω ("fulfil"): Acts 1:16; 3:18; 13:27; συμπληρόω ("be fulfilled"): Acts 2:2.

80 Cf. Luke 2:49; 4:43; 9:22; 13:33; 17:25; 19:5; 21:9; 22:37; 24:7.26.40; Acts 1:16.21; 3:21; 4:12; 5:29; 9:6.16; 14:22; 15:5; 16:30; 17:3; 19:21; 20:35; 23:11; 24:19; 25:10; 27:24.

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people, and now open to the nations, but without denying access to individual Jews who embrace the gospel.

Not only is the passage characterised by a clear structure, but it functions as a summary of the main topics of Luke's work. Primarily it can be seen as a recapitulation and conclusion both of the trial of Paul, which is narrated in Acts 21–26, and of the ministry of Paul, which was inaugurated in Antioch of Pisidia (Acts 13:14–49). Moreover, it can be regarded as the conclusion not only of the book of Acts, but also of the whole double work Luke-Acts. The quotation of the prophecy from Isaiah 6:9–10 in it expresses the idea of fulfilment, which already appeared in the introductory verse of the whole double work (Luke 1:1) and which undoubtedly belongs among its main theological ideas. We can state that the passage Acts 28:17–31 with the quotation of Isaiah 6:9–10, helps us to see Luke's double work as a narrative unity, confirming its main theological concept, which is the idea of God's mysterious and inscrutable plan of salvation and its fulfilment.

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Isaiah 6:9–10 in Gnostic Interpretations

Zuzana Vítková

1 Introduction

Gnosis was a religious current, or rather a specific way of interpreting the world, that appeared in the ancient Mediterranean at the end of the first or in the second century of the Christian era. It is not entirely clear what its roots were, but we know that it very early embraced themes of Christian thought. It also influenced the early development of Christian theology, though mostly in a specific 'negative' way, as the early Christian theologians and heresiologists, such as Irenaeus of Lyon, were trying to establish and to define what was theologically 'correct' against the background of the opinions they attributed to the 'Gnostics'.[1] Thus, the heresiologists have brought under the common label of 'Gnosis' many diverse teachings of different people, whom they took as their doctrinal opponents. It is far from certain, however, that all the people and authors of the texts labeled as 'Gnostics' understood themselves in this way. Many of them probably considered themselves only to be Christians, who have a special insight and think in a broader context. What loosely connected the various streams and texts and what earned them the collective name, was the emphasis on knowledge (*gnosis*), which they took as a prerequisite for the 'awakening' of the divine element inside the human being, and so for the possibility of his or her salvation.

The scholars of the last century took over Irenaeus' distinguishing between 'orthodox' and 'Gnostic' or 'heretic'[2] and presupposed some religious 'fight' or 'competition' between quite well defined groups and its theological concepts, described by names, like e.g. 'Valentinians', 'Montanists', 'Sethians', but also the 'Pauline', 'Johannine', and 'Jewish' Christianity. They also followed Irenaeus in using the terms 'Gnosis' and 'Gnosticism' to cover a great variety

1 Irenaeus also invented a model of a single and true Christianity from which the heresies diverged (see Brakke, *Gnostics*, 5).

2 King, *Gnosticism*, 218: "Scholars have followed Irenaeus and the other ancient heresiologists by using it to define normative Christianity and to render certain forms of Christianity illegitimate. (…) the academic study of Gnosticism in the twentieth century reinscribes and reproduces the ancient discourse of orthodoxy and heresy."

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of ancient texts and intellectual currents[3] as well as in turning interpretative categories into social.[4] As a consequence the Gnosis began to be considered as a separate religion.[5]

In more recent times, there appeared a persuasive criticism of this attractive, but not very accurate and a rather simplifying scheme.[6] The Christianity in the pre-Constantine period encompassed much richer variety of diverse concepts than we can imagine. The boundaries between the groups were not clear, people and ideas travelled. In this era, we can speak only of 'proto-orthodoxy'.[7] The scholars criticizing the concept of Gnosis as too broad even suggest that the category should be abandoned because it puts under one umbrella people and texts all too diverse.[8] Others propose that the name should be used only for more delimited group of material, such as 'Sethian Gnosticism' or 'Classical Gnosticism'.[9] These scholars, trying to assemble a set of ancient writings that likely originated among a group of people who called themselves and were known as 'Gnostics', seek to re-define the term on the basis of the common mythology and ritual as a social category.[10] Other researchers argue

3 King, *Gnosticism*, 53: "The discourse of orthodoxy and heresy has been employed to construe the relationship of Gnosticism to Christianity almost solely in terms of difference, and the relationship of widely varying so-called Gnostic materials to each other almost solely in terms of similarity."

4 Brakke, *Gnostics*, 22.

5 See, for example, Rudolph, *Gnosis*, 2: "We shall not go far wrong to see in it a dualistic religion …" Brakke, *Gnostics*, 21: "As Gnosticism became [*sc.* in the work of scholars, ZV] a religion seemingly without boundaries, the people and texts that scholars assigned to it assumed the characteristics of that religion, even if they did not display it."

6 See esp. Williams, *Rethinking*; King, *Gnosticism*; Brakke, *Gnostics*.

7 Cf. Brakke, *Gnostics*, 7–10: "There was no single and uniform proto-orthodoxy, but multiple modes of piety, authority, and theology that later orthodoxy represents as its forerunners." Also the idea that we should track down the Gnostic ideas to one single root (like Irenaeus who believed that this 'root' was in Simon Magus) was abandoned.

8 Williams, *Rethinking*, 214: "We have constructed category which is too poorly defined and inclusive too far of large"; see also p. 255. However, his proposed category of "biblical demiurgical tradition" (*Rethinking*, 72–73) is also not very satisfying. Williams' book has the merit of deconstructing many clichés that have come to be associated with the 'Gnostics' (that they dramatically reverse the Biblical narrative in their interpretations; that they behaved in using the old traditions like some religious 'parasites'; that they were either licentious or strictly ascetic).

9 King, *Gnosticism*, 218.

10 This group corresponds to those whom modern historians have often called 'Sethians' or 'Sethian Gnostics'; Brakke, *Gnostics*, 27–31; see also 50–51 (the list of ancient works attributed to Gnostics and the related texts).

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for approaching Gnosis as a category defined rather typologically, focusing on better definition and clarification of Gnostic features.[11]

A better classification of individual traditions and their differentiation, leading into demarcation of the reliable corpus of Gnostic texts (which more or less corresponds to the writings so far called 'Sethian'), is very helpful and certainly needed, as well as a typological description which would define the main features of Gnostic thinking, so we do not lose from our sight a number of texts that share many interesting ideas with the 'true' Gnostic texts, but did not pass through the strict 'Sethian' classification. It is also usually better to speak more carefully of a 'Gnostic school of thought' or of 'Gnostic tendencies'.[12] At the same time, we must bear in mind that since Gnosis *was not* a strictly defined religion, there was nothing like a Gnostic 'orthodoxy'. Therefore, the efforts to extract a 'clear' form of the Gnostic teaching or to fix one version of its myth (e.g. the myth of *Ap. John*)[13] as something like 'canonical scale' should be taken with maximal carefulness.

The salvific nature of knowledge mediated by divine interference may be taken as the main characteristic of the Gnostic thinking. In the Sethian texts, this was closely linked to a certain mythology, which drew from many traditions, primarily Christian, Jewish and Greek. There was another important element of Gnostic thought closely related to the myth, namely a specific way of interpretation(s): a selection of themes and a peculiar optics, through which they were looked at. The myths of the Gnostics were in most part based especially on peculiar interpretations of the first chapters of the Book of Genesis and of other well-known biblical passages. Among those biblical texts important for the Gnostic theology was also the *Book of Isaiah*.

11 Here is, for example, the list of the main characteristics of Gnosis by Christoph Markschies: (1) completely other-worldly, distant, supreme God (2) introduction of further divine figures (3) estimation of the world and matter as evil, alienation to it, (4) distinct creator God (5) explanation by a mythological drama of the fall of the divine element (6) knowledge could be gained through descended redeemer figure, (7) salvation comes through the knowledge of God and of the divine spark inside man, (8) dualism of various types. (Markschies, *Gnosis*, 16–17) The definition by Marvin Meyer speaks of "a religious tradition that emphasizes the primary place of gnosis, … understood through aspects of wisdom, often personified wisdom, presented in creation stories, particularly stories based on the Genesis accounts, and interpreted by means of a variety of religious and philosophical traditions, including Platonism, in order to proclaim a radically enlightened way and life of knowledge." (Meyer, *Gnostic Discoveries*, 42)

12 If in the following text I still do not restrain myself from labelling some texts, their authors and their teaching as 'Gnostic', it is with this caution and for the sake of simplification.

13 Brakke, *Gnostics*, 44.

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The Gnostic exegetes had at their disposal a large arsenal of approaches and methods,[14] but one of them was very specific: they did not attempt to adequately 'explain' the anthropomorphic or ethically problematic features of the biblical God, but literally interpreted them as expressions of the true nature of the lower Creator god. Therefore, Isaiah 6:10 was one of their favourite biblical passages.

2 Testimony of Truth

One of the writings in the ninth codex of the Nag Hammadi library, called Testimony of Truth, is a polemic treatise with homiletic features.[15] The speaker is a Christian Gnostic teacher who emphasizes knowledge, promotes encratism, rejects martyrdom, and refuses to accept the doctrine that the God of the Old Testament is the true father of Jesus. We cannot ascribe this polemic tractate to a particular school of thought.

After the author has brought his version of the Paradise story to an end, he adds a short commentary of his own in which he recounts the main 'nongodly' attributes of the Biblical God. He asks:[16]

> But what sort is this God? First [he] envied Adam that he should eat from the tree of knowledge. And secondly he said, "Adam, where are you?" And God does not have foreknowledge, that is, since he did not know this from the beginning. [And] afterwards he said, "Let us cast him [out] of this place, lest he eat of the tree of life and live for ever." Surely he has shown himself to be a malicious envier. And what kind of a God is this? Indeed, great is the blindness of those who read (this) and have not recognized him![17] (ⲛⲁⲩⲉ ⲧⲙ̄ⲛ̄ⲧⲃⲗ̄ⲗⲉ ⲅⲁⲣ ⲛ̄ⲛⲉⲧⲱⲩ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲙ̄ⲡⲟⲩⲥⲟⲩⲱⲛⲩ̄)

In the last sentence we could see the first allusion to the theme of obduracy, more developed further in the text. As a testimony to the malicious character of this "God", the author adds the quotation from Exod 20:5 (a classic proof-text for the Gnostics):[18] "I am a jealous God. I will bring the sins of the fathers upon

14 See Vítková, "Holy".

15 NHC IX,3 29,6–74,30. The date of origin is probably the end of the second or the turn of the third century (Pearson and Giversen, "Testimony," 118; Gianotto, *La testimonianza*, 89).

16 *Testim. Truth* NHC IX,3 47,14–48,4.

17 Or: "it". Translation by Pearson and Giversen, "Testimony," 165, the last sentence is taken from Luttikhuizen, "Critical," 79.

18 *Testim. Truth* NHC IX,3 48,4–8.

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the children until three (and) four generations", and, as the reason why this evidence is neglected by ordinary believers, he quotes Isa 6:10:

> ⲁⲩⲱ ⲡⲉϫⲁϥ ϫⲉ ϯⲛⲁⲧⲣⲉ ⲡⲟⲩϩⲏⲧ ⲟⲩⲙⲟⲧ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲧⲣⲉⲡⲟⲩⲛⲟⲩⲥ ⲣ̄ ⲃⲗ̄ⲗⲉ ϫⲉⲕⲁⲁⲥ ⲉⲛⲟⲩⲣ̄ⲛⲟⲉⲓ ⲟⲩⲇⲉ ⲛ̄ⲛⲟⲩⲣ̄ⲕⲁⲧⲁⲗⲁⲙⲃⲁⲛⲉ ⲛ̄ⲛⲉⲧⲟⲩϫⲱ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟⲟⲩ ⲁⲗⲗⲁ ⲛⲁⲓ ⲛ̄ⲧⲁϥϫⲟⲟⲩ ⲛ̄ⲛⲉⲧⲣ̄ⲡⲓⲥⲧⲉⲩⲉ ⲉⲣⲟϥ [ⲁ]ⲩ[ⲱ] ⲉⲧⲱⲙ̄ⲱⲉ ⲛⲁϥ
>
> And he said: "I will make their heart thick, and I will cause their mind to become blind, that they might not understand nor comprehend the things that are said." But these things he has said to those who believe in him [and] serve him![19]

In the Bible, the one who voices this utterance and causes the obduracy is God, and it seems that the only one who hears this as the recipient of the revelation is Isaiah, standing in the Temple. However, he is entrusted to deliver the message to the people who will repeatedly fail to hear, and somehow, in this way, to transfer the obduracy onto them.

Who are the recipients of the obduracy, according to our Gnostic author? Under "those who believe in him [and] serve him", he understands not only the Jews in the Temple of the old times, but also his contemporary Jews as the recipients of the book of Isaiah (and of the Old Testament as well). His intention, however, is not to criticise them (they are blinded), but to show the arrogance of their God, who not only did not allow his believers to know the truth, but also – like a real villain – told them the *modus operandi* of his crime. The criticism of the author is, at the primary level of significance, aimed with full force at the Christians of the 'main' Church, who identified the Jewish God with the true God, the Father of Jesus, because they need not be blind any more after the revelation of Christ allowed them to understand the true character of the Demiurge.

The quotation from Isaiah is related here to the very possibility of interpreting the Old Testament. This is testified to by the previous allusion to the blindness of those who read and do not understand.[20] The end of the quotation of Isa 6:10 varies, but it is evident that the Gnostic author believes that to "comprehend the things that are said" – that is, to understand the true situation behind the biblical text – is very important, and indeed, brings salvation

19 *Testim. Truth* NHC IX,3 48,8–15. Amended translation of Pearson and Giversen, "Testimony," 165.

20 *Testim. Truth* NHC IX,3 48,2–4.

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(as "turning and being healed" for Isa 6:9–10; John 12:40; Mt 13:15; Acts 28:27 and "turning and being forgiven" for Mk 4:12).

The author of the Testimony of Truth not only knows the 'milder' version of Isa 6:10 of the LXX, according to which the cause of obduracy lies in the people ("For the heart of this people has grown fat"),[21] but he is also familiar with the sense of the original Masoretic text (MT: "Make the heart of this people fat")[22] and/or with the 'harsh' tradition of interpretation, in which the cause of obduracy is God himself (Mark 4:12; John 12:40)[23] and reflects it in the first person causative ("I will make …"): the one who acts here is directly the God – Demiurge. The "blinding" instead of "shutting" reminds one here of John 12:40.[24] The passage is recounted in the Gnostic sense and 'translated' into peculiar terminology, in which the "blinding of eyes" becomes the "blinding of mind (*nous*)". This is in agreement with the opening lines of the treatise: "I will speak to those who know to hear not with the ears of the body but with the ears of the mind."[25] In the story of Paradise, the serpent promises: "On the day when you eat from the tree … the eyes of your mind[26] will be opened".[27] The serpent here is not a liar, but symbolises Christ.[28]

The scholars examining the versions of Isa 6 did not discern between "making fat" and "hardening" the hearts and interpreted them in the same way.[29] The tradition perhaps used these terms interchangeably, but in the Gnostic understanding we could see the distinction. The Coptic ⲟⲩⲛⲟⲧ here is an equivalent of the Greek παχύνειν, "to make thick",[30] referring mainly to the heart being enveloped by fat, perhaps as a consequence of comfortable living (cf. Deut 32:15). The obdurate people are probably not considered here to be directly 'evil' or

21 More about this in the chapter "The Strange Mission of Isaiah," 71–74, in this book.

22 Using *hiphil* imperatives with causative force; see Evans, *To See*, 18–19, and the chapters "The Strange Mission of Isaiah," 77, and "A Blinding Message: the Paradox of Obstinacy in Early Christian Theology," 83, in this book.

23 See Vlková, "Izajáš 6,9–10 v Novém Zákoně," 105–111; Evans, *To See*, 91–106; 129–135.

24 The passage in John 12:40 was inspired also by other Isaianic texts, see the chapter "A Blinding Message: the Paradox of Obstinacy in Early Christian Theology," 93, in this book.

25 Lit. "heart". *Testim. Truth* NHC IX,3 29,6–9.

26 Lit. "heart". Cf. Gen 3:5 and see also the interpretation of the same passage in *Orig. World* NHC II,5, where the situation is described without using the metaphor of the bodily senses as the "opening of mind" (for Gen 3:7; *Orig. World* NHC II,5 119,11–12) and the "sobering of mind" (for Gen 3:5; *Orig. World* NHC II,5 119,1–2). For the specific 'language' of Gnostic myths, see Arnold-Döben, *Die Bildersprache*.

27 *Testim. Truth* NHC IX,3 46,4–7.

28 See *Testim. Truth* NHC IX,3 48,15–49,11.

29 Evans, *To See*, 13; Luttikhuizen, *Gnostic*, 77.

30 See Crum, *Coptic Dictionary*, 479b–480a.

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cruel in consequence of their obduracy, like the "hardened ones" (cf. Exod 9:12 and Deut 15:7); they are only foolish servants of the demiurge.

Isa 6:9–10 is not attested in the Sahidic Coptic fragments of the Old Testament, but we can find the quotation in the Sahidic edition of Matt 13:14–15 and Acts 28:26–27 (Horner). The hearts of the people are, according to this translation, "hardened" (ⲛ̀ϥϫⲟⲧ), so we can conclude that the Coptic translator of Testimony of Truth did not base his quoting on this tradition and probably translated directly from his original text.[31]

3 Apocryphon of John

The treatise called Apocryphon of John has been preserved to our times in four versions.[32] It is usually attributed to 'Sethian' Gnosticism[33] and its special value lies in the fact that it retains the Gnostic myth in the full length and in a (relatively) easy-to-understand form. The author, editors, or place of origin are not known, but the earliest evidence of the mythological core of the writing is around 180 CE.[34] The tractate is preserved in two distinct recensions, longer (NHC II,1 and IV,1) and shorter (BG,2 and NHC III,1). The speaker of the main part of the treatise is the Gnostic Jesus. After his crucifixion, he reveals to his disciple John the Gnostic version of the history of the heavenly and earthly worlds and the final destiny of the souls, according to how they behaved in this world.

A very important moment in the story is the creation of Adam, depicting the foundation of human nature. In this creation, the archons and the heavenly realm participated on opposite sides. The Demiurge Jaldabaoth, the illicit son of Sophia, whom she created without the consent of the Father – Invisible Spirit,[35] illegitimately took part of the spiritual element (called "light-power") of his mother.[36] After his famous blasphemy "I am the jealous God and there is no other God beside me",[37] Sophia realised her fault, repented, and was

31 As we will see bellow, this also applies to the Coptic translator(s) of *Ap. John.*

32 In the Nag Hammadi corpus there are no fewer than three versions (NHC II,1 1,1–32,10; NHC III,1 1,1–40,11; NHC IV,1 1,1–49,19–28) and one version is contained also in the Berlin codex BG 8502,2 19,6–77,7.

33 For a definition of this category see Turner, "Typologies," 169–176.

34 One of the sources of the treatise was known by Irenaeus (*AH* 1,29); cf. Waldstein and Wisse, *Apocryphon*, 1 and 188–193; King, *Secret*, 17.

35 NHC II,1 9,25–10,19.

36 NHC II,1 10,19–21; 13,26–28.

37 NHC II,1 13,8–9; cf. Isa 45:5–6.18 and 46:9.

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taken up to the ninth heaven.[38] Then a voice came from above, announcing "the Man exists and the Son of Man",[39] and the heavenly Mother-Father – the true God – revealed his appearance (or image) on the waters.[40] The archons decided to create a man according to this image and according to their[41] (or God's[42]) likeness.

The longer recension contains a very detailed description of the creation of Adam's psychic body, accomplished by the authorities of the demiurge and their angels. However, their product was completely inactive and motionless.[43] Immediately, the heavenly Mother-Father sent his son Autogenes and the four lights to the Demiurge disguised as his angels. They advised him that Adam could be animated if the Demiurge blew some of the spiritual substance (which he had taken from Sophia and kept 'inactivated') into Adam's face.[44] After he had done this in ignorance, the body of Adam moved and was luminous. Now the archons became jealous, for they recognised that Adam was – because of the power of light – more intelligent than they were and, moreover, free of wickedness. So they took him and cast him into the lowest region of all matter.[45]

Immediately, the Mother-Father sent to the spiritual power in Adam a helper named Epinoia ("Afterthought", "Reflection", or "Remembrance") of light, the heavenly Eve. With this helper hidden inside him, Adam raised himself in his thinking above those who had made him.[46] When the archons realised this, they bound Adam into the prison of a material body created from fire, earth, water, and their counterfeit (ⲁⲛⲧⲓⲙⲓⲙⲟⲛ)[47] or contrary (ⲁⲛⲧⲓⲕⲉⲓⲙⲉⲛⲟⲛ)[48] spirit. Then they placed him in the Paradise and recommended that he eat from the (deceptive) tree of (their) life and forbade him to eat from the tree of knowledge.[49] Nevertheless, because of Epinoia inside him, Adam was now immune to the archons' advice and he did not obey them.[50]

38 NHC II,1 13,32–14,13.
39 NHC II,1 14,14–15.
40 NHC II,1 14,18–34.
41 NHC II,1 15,1–4.
42 NHC III,1 22,3–6.
43 NHC II,1 15,5–19,15.
44 BG,2 51,8–17; NHC II,1 19,15–25.
45 NHC II,1 19,25–20,9.
46 NHC II,1 20,9–31.
47 NHC II,1 21,9.
48 BG,2 55,8–9.
49 NHC II,1 20,32–22,2.
50 NHC II,1 22,15–18.

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So the Demiurge decided to 'extract' the heavenly help from Adam (according to the short recension):[51]

> ⲁϥⲣ̀ϩⲛⲁϥ ⲉⲉⲓⲛⲉ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲛ̄ⲧⲥⲟⲙ ⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲩⲧⲁⲁⲥ ⲛⲁϥ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ϩⲓ̈ⲧⲟⲟⲧϥ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲁϥⲛⲟⲩⲭⲉ ⲛⲟⲩⲃⲱⲉ ⲉⲭⲛ̄ ⲁⲇⲁⲙ ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲡⲉⲭⲁⲓ̈ ⲛⲁϥ ⲭⲉ ⲡⲉⲭ̄ⲥ̄ ⲟⲩ ⲧⲉ ⲧ̄ⲃⲱⲉ ⲛ̄ⲧⲟϥ ⲇⲉ ⲡⲉⲭⲁϥ ⲭⲉ ⲕⲁⲧⲁ ⲑⲉ ⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲙⲱⲩ̈ⲥⲛⲥ ⲁⲛ ⲭⲟⲟⲥ ⲭⲉ ⲁϥⲧⲣⲉϥⲛ̄ⲕⲟⲧⲕ ⲁⲗⲗⲁ ⲛ̄ⲧⲁϥϩⲱⲃⲥ̄ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲉⲭⲛ̄ ⲛⲉϥⲁⲓⲥⲑⲏⲥⲓⲥ ϩⲛ̄ ⲟⲩϩⲃⲥ̄ ⲁϥⲑⲣⲱⲟϥ ϩⲛ̄ ⲧⲁⲛⲁⲓⲥⲑⲏⲥⲓⲁ ⲕⲁⲓ ⲅⲁⲣ ⲁϥⲭⲟⲟⲥ ϩⲓ̈ⲧⲙ̄ ⲡⲉⲡⲣⲟⲫⲏⲧⲏⲥ ⲉϥⲭⲱ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟⲥ ⲭⲉ ϯⲛⲁⲑⲣⲱⲟ ⲛ̄ⲛⲙ̄ⲙⲁⲁⲭⲉ ⲛ̄ⲛⲉⲩϩⲏⲧ ⲭⲉ ⲛ̄ⲛⲉⲩⲛⲟⲓ̈ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲭⲉ ⲛ̄ⲛⲉⲩⲛⲁⲩ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ
>
> "And (the Chief Ruler) wanted to bring out the power which had been given to (Adam) by him. And he cast an 'oblivion'[52] over Adam." I said to him, "Christ, what is the 'oblivion'?" And he said, "It is not as Moses said,[53] 'He put him to sleep,' but it was his perception that he veiled with a veil. He made him heavy with lack of perception.[54] For indeed he said through the prophet, 'I will make the ears of their hearts heavy that[55] they may not understand and may not see'."[56]

The parallel version of the long recension[57] reads the following:

> ⲁⲩⲱ ⲁϥⲟⲩⲱⲱⲡⲉ ⲁⲉⲓⲛⲉ ⲛ̄ⲧⲥⲟⲙ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲉⲛⲧⲁⲩⲧⲁⲁⲥ ⲛⲁϥ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ϩⲓⲧⲟⲟⲧϥ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲁϥⲉⲓⲛⲉ ⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲃⲱⲉ ⲁⲭⲛ̄ ⲁⲇⲁⲙ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲡⲉⲭⲁⲉⲓ ⲙ̄ⲡⲥ̄ⲱⲣ̄ ⲭⲉ ⲟⲩ ⲧⲉ ⲧ̄ⲃⲱⲉ ⲛ̄ⲧⲟϥ ⲇⲉ ⲡⲉⲭⲁϥ ⲭⲉ ⲛ̄ⲑⲉ ⲁⲛ ⲉⲛⲧⲁⲙⲱⲩ̈ⲥⲛⲥ ⲥⲣⲁⲓ̈ ⲉⲁⲕⲥⲱⲧⲙ̄ ⲁϥⲭⲟⲟⲥ ⲅⲁⲣ ⲥⲣⲁⲓ̈ ϩⲙ̄ ⲡⲉϥⲱⲟⲣⲡ ⲛ̄ⲭⲱⲙⲉ ⲭⲉ ⲁϥⲭⲧⲟ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟϥ ⲁⲗⲗⲁ ϩⲛ̄ ⲛⲉϥⲁⲓⲥⲑⲏⲥⲓⲥ ⲕⲁⲓ ⲅⲁⲣ ⲁϥⲭⲟⲟⲥ ϩⲓⲧⲛ̄ ⲡⲉⲡⲣⲟⲫⲏⲧⲏⲥ ⲭⲉ ϯⲛⲁϩⲣⲟⲱ[58] ⲉϩⲣⲁⲓ̈ ⲁⲭⲛ̄ ⲛⲟⲩϩⲉⲧⲉ ⲭⲉⲕⲁⲁⲥ ⲛ̄ⲛⲟⲩϯ ϩⲧⲏⲩ ⲟⲩⲧⲉ {ⲭ}ⲛ̄ⲛⲟⲩⲛⲁⲩ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ

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51 I quote the version of the Berlin Codex (BG,2 58,10–59,6). The substantial differences in the parallel passage in NHC III,1 28,25–29,12 are mentioned in the footnotes.

52 The version of NHC III,1 29,2 reads here (and also further in 29,3) the biblical (LXX) ἔκστασις, "trance".

53 NHC III,1 29,4–5: "He smiled and said, 'Are you thinking that it is as Moses said …'"

54 NHC III,1 29,7: "it was his perception that he veiled with lack of perception."

55 NHC III,1 29,10–11 "so [that]".

56 Here and below the adapted translation of Waldstein and Wisse, *Apocryphon*; I translate ⲃⲱⲉ as "oblivion" instead of "trance".

57 According to NHC II,1 22,18–28. The text of NHC IV,1 34,26–35,7 is (except for a couple of small dialect variations) almost identical.

58 The same word as in Sahidic Acts 28:27 (Horner).

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> "And (the Chief Ruler) wanted to bring out the power which he himself had given him. And he brought an 'oblivion' over Adam." And I said to the saviour, "What is the 'oblivion'?" And he said, "It is not as Moses wrote and you heard. For he said in his first book, 'He put him to sleep,' but (it was) in his perception. For indeed he said through the prophet, 'I will make their hearts heavy that they may not pay attention and may not see'."

The story continues:[59]

> "Then the Epinoia of the light hid herself in (Adam). And the Chief Ruler wanted to bring her out of his rib. But the Epinoia of the light cannot be grasped. Although darkness pursued her, it did not catch her. And he brought a part of his power out of him. And he made another form in the shape of a woman according to the likeness of Epinoia which had appeared to him. And he brought the part which he had taken from the power of the man into the female form, and not as Moses said, 'his rib'. And (Adam) saw the woman beside him. And in that moment luminous Reflection appeared, and she lifted the veil which lay over his mind.[60] And he became sober from the drunkenness of darkness. And he recognized his counter-image."

The story depicts one of the plots of the archons in the complicated story of Adam. This plot turns (as usual) against the archons: they wanted to deprive Adam of his light and helper, but the Epinoia ("Reflection") of light cannot be (as the Gnostic author shows by allusion to John 1:5 and 1 Cor 2:14) grasped by the authorities of darkness and the result is that they only created Eve for Adam, his consort and helper of the same spiritual condition.

The quotation of Isa 6:10 is put into the context of Gen 2:21, where the archons are trying to extract Adam's spiritual power from him. The aim of the obduracy is the first man, but the story of Adam here symbolises the constitution of human nature, so it is the obduracy that the archons could in some way cause to happen to every person. The author shows that Adam's sleep or trance means a decrease in his ability to intellectually recognise higher divine realities. This could be fatal for him. But in the Gnostic stories, a continual heavenly help is usually ready for humanity. When Adam sees Epinoia and recognises

59 *Ap. John* NHC II,1 22,28–23,9.

60 Cf. the veil of Moses, which, according to Paul, lies on the hearts of Jews reading the Scripture and which is taken away when one turns to Jesus, in 2 Cor 3:15–16.

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the image of God in his consort, he immediately becomes 'sober' from the archons' snares. Nevertheless, this is only one step on the way to the Gnosis, and so to the salvation of the Gnostic Adam. It leads to the next (and still not the final) step, which is the eating from the tree of knowledge.[61]

The one who causes obduracy here is (as in the *Testim. Truth*) the Demiurge – the pronouncement "I will make" is in the first person future indicative. We can observe the interplay between the somatic and intellectual meaning of obduracy as in the Isaiah text. Adam is now wearing a body created from the four elements, so the external blinding of his physical and cognitive senses seems to the archons as a good way of separating him from the divine world. The somatic "trance" (LXX; or "deep sleep", "gloom", MT) has an effect on his mind (as an "oblivion", "forgetfulness") in its spiritual blindness. However, the archons did not know the Adam's active "inner connection" with the true God, which is the Epinoia of light.[62]

The quotation of Isa 6:10 is, in a specific way, abridged and made "more prosaic". The original Hebrew (MT) "the heart of this people fat … their ears heavy" was shortened into making "the ears of their hearts heavy" (BG,2)[63] and then was probably further shortened into "making their hearts heavy" (NHC II,1). In the light of this consideration, the variant of BG appears as the older of the two. The expression "making (the heart) fat" is not suitable for the context of Adam's sleep, and so it was omitted. It is interesting that in the version of BG, a defect of one sense (ears) leads to a defect of another (seeing). The biblical "and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed" is changed into the simple "that they may not understand and may not see" (BG,2) or "that they may not pay attention and may not see" (NHC II,1). We have already noticed that in the Gnostic perspective a correct understanding is crucial for salvation.

61 *Ap. John* BG,2 60,16–61,7 and NHC II,1 23,25–33.

62 We can find another "obduracy" passage in *Ap. John* NHC II,1 30,9–11 (par. BG,2 75,7–10). The angels of the Demiurge have deceived the daughters of men (unlike the Biblical version of the story in Gen 6:1–4, they experienced a failure at first and then they executed their plan only after they had changed themselves into the appearances of their mates) and filled them with their spirit of darkness and begot children out of the darkness according to the likeness of their counterfeit spirit (*Ap. John* BG,2 73,18–75,10; NHC II,1 29,16–30,11). "And they closed (ⲧⲱⲙ) their hearts, and they hardened themselves/them (ⲁⲩⲧ̀ⲡⲱϩⲟⲧ ⲛⲁⲩ) through the hardness of the despicable spirit until now." (*Ap. John* NHC II,1 30,9–11) "He closed their hearts, and they became hard through the hardness of the counterfeit spirit until now." (*Ap. John* BG,2 75,7–10). For the interpretation of Gen 6:1–4 in *Ap. John* see my article "Gnostic Rewriting".

63 In the formulation "ears … heavy" the Coptic quotation follows MT and differs from the LXX βαρέως ἤκουσαν. For a more detailed analysis of the various versions of the text of Isa 6:9–10 see the chapter "The Strange Mission of Isaiah" in this book.

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Another important biblical passage that the author probably has in mind here is Isa 29:9–10,[64] where we find the metaphors for drunkenness of the people and the "spirit of deep sleep", which God "poured upon" them (MT) or "made" them "to drink" (LXX).[65] In the MT of Isa 29:10, there is the same word *tardema* ("deep sleep") as in Gen 2:21, which LXX of Isa 29:10 translated as κατάνυξις, "stupor".[66] The Gnostic author was perhaps aware of the original meaning or connotations of the word and it is probable that he put the quotation from Isa 6,10 into the context of the story of Adam because of this supposed background of Isa 29:9–10.[67]

The term "oblivion" (ϧⲱϫⲉ)[68] and the same notion of spiritual separation from the heavenly world are attested to by another passages of our tractate. The guilty Sophia also finds herself in a state of "oblivion" as a result of her misconduct; she has darkened and in the darkness of ignorance the "oblivion" comes upon her.[69] Adam's body created from the four elements was also called "the fetter of oblivion", by which the archons wanted to keep Adam in the lower areas of their world.[70]

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64 In LXX it reads: ἐκλύθητε καὶ ἔκστητε καὶ κραιπαλήσατε οὐκ ἀπὸ σικερα οὐδὲ ἀπὸ οἴνου· ὅτι πεπότικεν ὑμᾶς κύριος πνεύματι κατανύξεως καὶ καμμύσει τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς αὐτῶν καὶ τῶν προφητῶν αὐτῶν καὶ τῶν ἀρχόντων αὐτῶν, οἱ ὁρῶντες τὰ κρυπτά.

65 The "drinking a spirit of deep sleep" from LXX of Isa 29:10 probably is echoed in *Ap. John* NHC II,1 25,7–9 (only attested in the long recension): "And he made them drink water of forgetfulness (ϧⲱϫⲉ), from the Chief Ruler, in order that they may not know from where they came." Cf. also the Sahidic fragment of Isa 29:10 (Ciasca): ⲁⲡⲭⲟⲉⲓⲥ ⲧⲥⲟⲧⲛ ⲛⲟⲩⲡⲛⲁ ⲛⲙⲙⲁϩ ⲛϩⲏⲧ ("the Lord has made you to drink the spirit of grief"; cf. Crum, *A Coptic Dictionary*, 164).

66 Liddell, Scott, and Jones, *Greek-English Lexikon*, 411: "stupefaction", "slumber" (cf. also Rom 11:8). But cf. ἔκστητε in Isa 29:9 LXX and the ἔκστασις of Gen 2:21 LXX.

67 In the context of the story of Adam, he could also have in mind here, and polemicise with, Isa 29:16 ("Shall the potter be regarded as the clay, that the thing made should say of its maker, 'He did not make me'; or the thing formed say of him who formed it, 'He has no understanding'?" ESV): from the Gnostic perspective, the creation (Adam) could indeed have said that the Demiurge had no understanding.

68 Only the version of NHC III,1 29,2 has here the biblical (LXX) ⲉⲕⲥⲧⲁⲥⲓⲥ, "trance". It seems that the interpretation developed also in the Coptic tradition through the choice of the word. Coptic ϧⲱϫⲉ has a very wide range of meanings: "sleep", "oblivion", "trance", "forgetfulness", "gloom"; cf. Crum, *A Coptic Dictionary*, 518b–519 ("forgetfulness", "sleep", "carelessness"); Westendorf, *Koptisches Handwörterbuch*, 29 ("Schlaf", "Vergessen", "Erkenntnisunfähigkeit"), 33 ("Vergeßlichkeit", "Schlaf", "Vernachlässigung") and 290.

69 "… but when she had seen the wickedness which had happened, and the theft which her son had committed, she repented. And as she was overcome by oblivion (ϧⲱϫⲉ) in the darkness of ignorance, and she began to be ashamed." (*Ap. John* NHC II,1 13,21–25)

70 *Ap. John* NHC II,1 21,12. Cf. also the word expression "deep (or 'heavy') sleep" (ϥⲓⲛⲏⲃ ⲉⲧϩⲟⲣϣ), which is mentioned in *Ap. John* in the final revelatory speech of Pronoia (Providence). One of her saving tasks is to wake up the inner man: "And I entered into

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Our detailed examination of one passage quoting Isaiah showed that the influence of this book or its tradition on *Ap. John* is multilayered and complex. It is probable that a lot of allusions to this Biblical book have not been recognised yet.[71] We have also seen that the Gnostics operated not only with the LXX version, but somehow, they could have been familiar with the original formulation or meaning of the Masoretic text.

4 The (Second) Apocalypse of James

We can also find an allusion to Isa 6:10 in the Second Apocalypse of James.[72] The first part of this Christian-Gnostic treatise, which cannot be attributed to a specific teacher or school,[73] contains the speeches of James the Just as the possessor of special revelations of Jesus. To the end of this part, before the description of his martyrdom (probably added later),[74] James says:

> "[…] and he allows me to hear. And play your trumpets, your flutes and your harps [of this house]. The Lord has taken you captive from the Lord, having closed (ⲧⲥⲱϥ) your ears, that they may not hear the sound of my word. Yet[75] you [will be able to pay][76] heed (ϯ ϩⲧⲏⲧⲛ̄) in your hearts [and] you will call me 'the Just One'."[77]

The double mention of "Lord" (ⲛ̀ⲟⲉⲓⲥ) is difficult to understand. Hedrick proposes interpreting the first "Lord" as the Demiurge and the second Lord

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the midst of their prison which is the prison <of> the body. And I said: 'He who hears, let him get up from the deep sleep'" (*Ap. John* NHC II,1 31,3–6). She also advises him: "beware of the deep sleep and the enclosure of the inside of Hades" (*Ap. John* NHC II,1 31,20–22).

71 In the index of Nag Hammadi Biblical quotations and allusions (Evans et al., *Nag Hammadi*, 478–489), the possible allusions to Isa 29,9–10 mentioned here are not listed.

72 NHC V,4 44,11–63,32.

73 Kaiser and Plisch, "Die (zweite)," 423. Veilleux, *La première*, 14, considers the treatise to be Valentinian. There is no direct clue for the dating; scholars speak of a relatively early date on the basis of the Jewish-Christian tradition used in the treatise and of the lack of clear references to the New Testament and to the Gnostic systems developed later: Hedrick, "(Second)," 108, Kaiser and Plisch, "Die (zweite)," 425.

74 Hedrick, "(Second)," 107.

75 Literally: "and".

76 There is also the possibility that the small lacuna at the end of line 11 contained the negative ⲁⲛ; in this case, the reading should be "you [will not be able to pay] heed."

77 *2 Apoc. Jas.* NHC V,4 60,1–12, translated by Hedrick, "(Second)," 139–141.

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as Jesus or the true Gnostic God the Father.[78] Funk omits the words "from the Lord".[79] I am inclined rather to suppose a scribing error and read the text as a double mention of one agent, somehow as follows: "The Lord has taken you captive, from the Lord your ears <were> closed …" However, the question, who this "Lord" is, remains. Scholars usually see in him the Demiurge, who, by the Temple service, "captured" the people in the senses of the mortal body, but they still are capable of understanding, not by the senses but by their hearts (or minds).[80] However, the meaning of the passage is quite obscured, partly as a result of the fragmentary state of the text and partly because it was probably corrupted in the process of transcription.

The allusion to Isaiah was probably not chosen without reason, as the story of James offers interesting parallels with that of Isaiah. The setting is – as in Isa 6 – the Temple area.[81] The scene of James preaching on the steps of the Temple is also known from other sources.[82] The Temple ritual involved also music, so it was probably quite noisy there.[83] So the ritual, prescribed by the "Lord" – the Demiurge, successfully prevented the participants from concentrating on something else, and the only one who could really "hear" in this metaphor was James, provided with this ability probably by Jesus ("he allows me to hear").[84] According to the Christian Gnostic author of *2 Apoc. Jas.*, the situation of Isaiah may be repeating itself in a specific way in the story of James: he

78 Hedrick, "(Second)," 140, note to page 60,5–7. He also ponders the possibility that the scribe has incorrectly written ϫⲟⲉⲓⲥ instead of ϫⲓⲥⲉ (therefore the reading could be: "The Lord has taken you captive from the height").

79 Funk, "Die zweite," p. 274: "Der Herr ist es, der euch gefangengenommen hat {…}, indem er euch die Ohren verschließt, damit sie nicht den Klang meiner Rede hören und ihr in euren Herzen aufmerken [und] mich den 'Gerechten' nennen [könntet]."

80 Hedrick, "(Second)," 140, note to page 60,5–7; Veilleux, *La première*, 178; Kaiser and Plisch, "Die (zweite)," 430, notes 56–59.

81 *2 Apoc. Jas.* NHC V,4 45,18–25; 60,20–23. Although *2 Apoc. Jas.* takes place in the outer, public part of the Temple.

82 Ps.-Clem., *Recogn.* 1,66–73.

83 For the music as part of the regular service see Amos 5:23; in the Temple, the courtyard of women and courtyard of Israel were connected by a flight of fifteen steps which corresponded allegorically to the fifteen "Songs of Ascent" in Psalms (Ps. 120–134) and upon which the Levites used to sing. Near were the chambers where they kept their musical instruments and there was also the "Gate of Song" through which they entered (Mishnah *Middot* 2,5–6). Probably the author of *2 Apoc. Jas.* situated James' preaching on these steps. He reports also that James for this occasion chose another place than he preached usually (*2 Apoc. Jas.* NHC V,4 45,18–25).

84 Still, also this passage was often conjectured in favour of reading that James is allowed to hear the voice of musical instruments; see Kaiser and Plisch, "Die (zweite)," 430, n. 56.

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preaches in vain to the people who are obdurated by (their service to) the Old Testament God, and he is very well aware of it. But unlike Isaiah, James is not a servant or co-worker of this God in causing the obduracy.

It is a question, how optimistic the treatise is with respect to the possibility that the same people presented in the Temple would in the end become capable of understanding. Mareim, the alleged author of this testimony,[85] "one of the priests", testifies further:

> [On] the day all the [people] and the crowd were disturbed and they showed that they had not been persuaded.... And I was with the priests and revealed nothing of the relationship since all of them were saying with one voice: 'Come, let us stone the Just One.'[86]

Calling James "the Just one" is not the proof that they are truly "paying heed by the heart", but rather of the opposite attitude.[87] However, there is still another possible allusion to Isa 6:9–10 in the same text, where Jesus speaks to James of the dullness of the others and assigns him as his intermediary in his knowledge:

> I am the stranger, and they have no knowledge of me in [their] thoughts, for they know me [in this place]. But it was fitting that others know through you. <This is> what I say to you: Hear and understand – for a multitude, when they hear, will be slow witted. But you, understand as I shall be able to tell you.[88]

So, I am inclined to understand the people who will be able to see through their ears as probably not the multitude immediately present in the Temple during James' preaching, but as the "others", i. e. the future individual readers of the book, although probably at the starting point also "slow-witted". The book of Isaiah, after all, was also intended for future generations.

85 *2 Apoc. Jas.* NHC V,4 44,15–17.

86 *2 Apoc. Jas.* NHC V,4 61,1–14.

87 The martyrdom story was probably joined to the preceding text later, so we do not know precisely the assumed original message and conclusion of the first half of the *2 Apoc. Jas*.

88 *2 Apoc. Jas.* NHC V,4 51,7–19; translated by Hedrick, "(Second)," 123. See also Evans, *To See*, 161.

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5 Conclusion

In *Testim. Truth* and *Ap. John*, the quotation of Isa 6:10 is applied to the specific interpretation of the story of Adam and used by Gnostic interpreters to reveal the true malicious nature of the Jewish creator God. In *Testim. Truth*, the saying is quoted after the story of expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise and the author uses the quotation to clarify why the Demiurge's true character was not, despite all that was written in the Scripture, discovered by more people, and so exhorts his audience to understand properly: after the revelation of Christ, they need not be blind. In *Ap. John* the quotation is set in the context of Gen 2:21, where the archons pondered how they could extract the spiritual power from Adam. The author shows that Adam's sleep or trance means a decrease in his ability to intellectually recognise higher divine realities. According to the Gnostics, the Demiurge could only create the physical obduracy of the capacities of the soul, but he cannot disrupt the inner connection of man to the divine world. This connection is located in Adam as the Epinoia of Light (*Ap. John*), or in the human mind or heart (*2 Apoc. Jas., Testim. Truth*).

Despite the differences in the individual texts, we can see some common elements in all three studied treatises: the source of the obduracy is the lower god – Demiurge; the obdurate people are not only the Jews, but the "oblivion" describes – in a specific sense – the situation of all humanity. However, the true revelation (by Epinoia of Light, by Jesus, or through James) should overcome this obduracy and turn people from the perception through blinded senses to the proper understanding through their inner capacity – human mind or heart. This specifically gnostic interpretation significantly relieved the harshness of the gloomy commission of the prophet, as it no more questioned the goodness of the supreme God, but rather was understood as a manifestation of the malice of the Demiurge.

We have also seen that the gnostic authors knew at least some parts of the book of Isaiah very well and used it as an important background, against which they meant the story of Adam should be interpreted. As for the texts of Isa 6:9–10 and 29:9–10, they apparently not only knew their LXX version, but were also somehow familiar with the original formulation or meaning of the Masoretic text.

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PART 3

To Understand Anew – Intertextuality in Interpretation

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'Do Not Go to Another Field'

Late Antique Rabbinic-Patristic Exegetical Encounter over the Book of Ruth

Eleanor Jasmine Foo

1 Introduction

There has been a surge in scholarly interest since the mid-nineteenth century in re-evaluating the nature of Jewish-Christian exegetical contact, particularly in the formative years of Christianity and rabbinic Judaism. With this development, there is an increasing boldness in arguing in favour of intertextuality, and comparative studies evincing exegetical encounters are gradually gaining ground. This paper seeks to build upon this trend and unearth greater potential for deepening our understanding of Jewish-Christian relations through such exegetical encounters.

The controversial book of Ruth invites curiosity regarding its place in the biblical canon, as it is a story with minimal reference to the divine and its main character is a Gentile woman. There was little early Jewish interest in this book.[1] Yet, unlike Esther, the canonical status of Ruth was never explicitly questioned.

The development in interpretation and the subsequent divergence between the Jewish and Christian treatment of the narrative is thus intriguing. In particular, their respective treatment of characters (particularly Ruth's Moabite status and identity) portrayed in the story invites deeper inquiry.

2 Methodology and Parameters

2.1 *Methodological Approach*

The purpose of this chapter is to illustrate the role of Scriptural interpretation in the interaction between the respective religious traditions, by comparing

1 Allusions to Ruth in Second Temple literature were found only in Jdt 11:23, Josephus's *Ant.* 5.318–337, and Pseudo-Philo's *L.A.B.* LX1.6. There is no mention of Ruth anywhere else in the Hebrew Bible save for the reference to Boaz in the genealogy in 1 Chr 2:9–15. In the New Testament, she is only mentioned in the context of Jesus' genealogy in Matt 1:5 and Luke 3:32 (which mentions Boaz but not Ruth).

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extant Christian and Jewish exegetical work on Ruth. In so doing, I try to identify the nature and extent of the interaction between the Church Fathers and Jewish Rabbis over scriptural exegesis,[2] and consequently any mutual influences and polemic elements in both.[3] In order to prove such interaction, "one has first to fulfil a preliminary condition and prove – even by means of circumstantial evidence – that the possibility of a direct or indirect connection is fairly probable."[4] While this cannot be dealt with at length here, I will first outline recent historical studies and comparative exercises to evaluate the nature and extent of early Jewish-Christian exegetical exchanges, in order to explore the circumstantial evidence of the probable connections in their respective readings of Ruth.

However, one cannot completely avoid the sense of circulatory logic in arguing for the existence or absence of Jewish-Christian exegetical encounters. My arguments are premised on the notion of Christianity and Judaism being two religions emerging under "a mutual competitive influence"[5] and assume that some form of exegetical encounter did take place (whether in the form of direct contact or literary apologies) between the rabbinic and patristic writers. What I mean by exegetical encounter is best defined by Grypeou: "an exegetical tradition which appears to show awareness of, or a response to, a tradition from the other faith group."[6] Grypeou does qualify that more often than not, the actual means by which awareness of the other group's exegetical tradition was gained is unknown. The possibilities (which remain guesswork) include general knowledge of a subject of controversy between the two, actual dialogues between individuals or representatives of each group, or knowledge of oral traditions.[7] Generally, such interactions are reflected by 'borrowing' or 'polemic'.

2 I am aware of the problematic designation of patristic and rabbinic writings on scriptures as 'exegesis' (Van der Heide, "Midrash," 43) but I am using the term of reference here loosely and out of convenience. By doing so, I am not suggesting that either was exegesis in the strict sense of the word.

3 Grypeou "Abraham's," 198, has cautioned against reading too much into parallel ideas, given that they stem from the same source of the biblical text. What needs to be considered is whether an interpretation may simply represent a logical understanding following from the biblical text.

4 Malul, *Comparative*, 100–1.

5 Stökl Ben Ezra, *Impact*, 333.

6 Grypeou, "Abraham's," 197.

7 Ibid., 197–8.

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2.2 *'Polemic-Seeking' Approach*

The 'polemic-seeking' approach identifies a given contrast between the set texts being compared and asserts that it was deliberate: the borrowing culture deliberately changed the borrowed material and adapted it to its own ideological scheme, thereby taking a polemical stance with respect to that of the source culture.[8] One important indication of a polemic encounter is whether there is a reference in either of the writings to a well-known subject of controversy between Jews and Christians,[9] which explains my focus on the theme of proselytism read into the story of Ruth.

> [W]henever a piece of rabbinic exegesis implicitly emphasizes Jewish repudiation of a notion or belief so prominently associated with Christianity that any Jew, with even slight Christian contacts, might be expected to have heard about it (albeit possibly in a garbled form), anti-Christian apologetics is to be assumed as a main motivation. The same will hold good where what the Jewish exegete is putting himself at pains to enunciate is some Jewish notion capable of acting as a counterpart to a well-known Christian idea.[10]

However, it is necessary to be circumspect about couching every contrast in such binary terms. The paucity of evidence relating to late Antique Jewish-Christian relations, coupled with the lack of explicit references to the other in both sets of literature, would caution against assuming a predominantly aggressive apologetic stance. The primary texts were, after all, principally exegetical, not apologetic, works and any polemical elements are likely to be incidental, as and when the opportunity arises.

2.3 *Intertextuality*

A precursor to polemic-seeking is the assumption of intertextuality. Having gained prominence in biblical studies – where it has taken on a life of its own since its inception by Julia Kristeva in the 1960s – intertextuality has become the more sophisticated way biblical scholars speak about allusions and source tracking. While the way biblical scholarship has appropriated this concept has not gone uncriticised, some have got round the problem by arguing that Kristeva's deduction about intertextuality – "any text is constructed as a mosaic

8 Malul, *Comparative*, 31.
9 Kessler, *Bound*, 28.
10 Loewe, "Apologetic," 174.

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of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another"[11] – is more of an ontological description than a prescription. Kristeva's idea of universal intertextuality leads ultimately to the assumption that for any particular text, there is a set of other texts and voices which are potentially relevant, and incorporated into the text.[12]

Working on very different types of texts, Miola (with early modern literature) and Robbins (with biblical texts)[13] have identified a range of intertexture that moves away from Kristeva's poststructuralism, which serves as a framework for this present subject.

2.3.1 Cultural Intertexture

What Robbins terms 'cultural intertexture' refers to the kind of knowledge possessed only by people within the particular culture or by people who have learnt that culture through studying it or direct interaction with members of it.[14] This knowledge may be drawn from source texts, namely: (a) source coincident, where a source text shapes the later text in such a way that knowledge of the earlier text is necessary for understanding of the later one; and (b) source remote, which recognises the existence of a source text that may not feature so predominantly in the mind of the author, or occurs within the sub-conscience of the author through its existence within the culture.[15]

Cultural intertexture thus operates through allusions or echoes, which lie somewhere along a spectrum of intertextual reference moving from the explicit to the subliminal.[16] While allusions depend on authorial intention, an echo, which is a subtler intertextual reference, "finesses such questions" and is not dependent on the conscious intention of the author.[17] Hays' tests for detecting intertextual echoes are based on the concept of *metalepsis*, which links texts together through an echo with the effect of recovering suppressed or implicit points that resonate between the texts:[18] "[a]llusive echo functions to suggest to the reader that text B should be understood in light of a broad interplay with

11 Kristeva, "Word," 37.
12 Fairclough, *Analysing*, 47.
13 On the basis of socio-rhetorical criticism, Robbins *Exploring*, 40, proposes that "intertexture is a text's representation of, reference to, and use of phenomena in the 'world' outside the text being interpreted".
14 Robbins, *Exploring*, 58.
15 Miola, "Seven," 19.
16 Hays, *Echoes*, 23.
17 Ibid., 29.
18 Oropeza, "Intertextuality," 455.

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text A, encompassing aspects of A beyond those explicitly echoed."[19] Of Hays' seven tests, the following are most relevant here:

1. Availability: was the source available to the author who allegedly echoes it and to the intended readers?
2. Historical plausibility: could the author intend the meaning and the readers be assumed to know it?
3. Satisfaction: does the echo make sense of the text and enlighten the contextual discourse?[20]

Nevertheless, the calibration of intertextual distance will be, to some degree, subjective.[21] Moreover, the source very often recedes into the discursive distance in such a way that it becomes difficult to identify real echoes from the readers merely "conjuring things out of the murmurings of our own imaginations."[22]

2.3.2 Social Intertexture

Traditions – conventions and configurations – are in close proximity to source remote. Here, the 'source' can be from discrete texts that have become a pervasive presence which may well have entered the later text via an indirect route, and does not require any direct contact with the source conventions.[23] Such social knowledge is commonly available to all, regardless of their cultural location.[24] This gives room to find intertextuality between the Jewish-Christian texts even if the earlier 'source' text does not feature prominently in the consciousness of the author, as long as he had some knowledge and awareness of the traditions and conventions of the other and was potentially responding to that of which he is cognizant. This will accordingly reduce the burden placed by Hirshman on mapping out with precision the interpretative development in order to determine what and how the polemic was taking place.[25]

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19 Hays, *Echoes*, 20.

20 Ibid., 29–32.

21 Miola, "Seven," 20.

22 Hays, *Echoes*, 23.

23 Miola, "Seven," 21.

24 Robbins, *Exploring*, 62.

25 Hirshman, *Rivalry*, 130: "[I]f we refer to anything as a polemic or a controversy, we have not thereby concluded our task but simply opened up many additional questions … we cannot avoid the slow and systematic collection of the various methods of exegesis used in both schools and trace, according to them, the picture of the confrontation and the hermeneutical encounter. It is not enough to say that something is a polemic, and we must take the trouble of describing the development of the argument as well as the methods to which the contenders resorted on the various issues."

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2.3.3 Historical Intertexture

Reference to historical knowledge is able to inform and constrain one's intertextual reading on the literary dimension.[26] Historical intertexture potentially encompasses socio-political and cultural phenomena, although taking these into consideration may lead to imprecision in analysis.[27] Nevertheless, this provides an avenue to examine the historical dimension of Jewish-Christian relations in late Antiquity and, specifically, controversies surrounding proselytism in order to determine the historical intertexture behind the primary texts. It would require the exploration of secondary sources beyond the primary textual encounters, which would help corroborate the existence of such 'historical events'.

2.4 *Proposed Methodology*

As mentioned, the preliminary task is to fulfil the test of plausibility. For this task, in part 3, I will survey recent studies relating to Jewish-Christian exegesis as to the likelihood of similar connections in exegetical works on Ruth. Evidently, source recitation did not occur in any of the primary sources, thus, the concepts of cultural and social intertexture would be helpful. I argue that there was historical awareness of Jewish-Christian exegetical thoughts on Ruth even if neither of the groups necessarily had the actual source text of the other to work with.

When the plausibility test is satisfied, part 4 will be a comparative exercise tracing the development of thought and arguments in the primary sources. The 'polemic-seeking approach' is employed to determine whether there was a hidden controversy underlying the rhetoric. The criteria thus goes beyond whether the reading of intertextual overtones 'feels' right, to whether it makes much greater sense of the text than otherwise. Does an intertextual interpretation best explain the conclusions that the Church Fathers and the Rabbis arrived at?

Part 5 examines the historical intertexture which brings together the data relating to the Jewish-Christian controversy on conversion and proselytism and shows how these may elucidate the patristic and rabbinic texts in our survey. This will move us beyond the literary realm to the social text of the sociocultural milieu within which the various texts were birthed in order to measure against the hypothesis of an exegetical encounter.

The caveat needs to be raised at the outset that in the case of something as multi-faceted and complex as the Jewish-Christian encounter, it is impossible

26 Hays, *Echoes*, 28.

27 Robbins, *Exploring*, 62.

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in one short study to trace the course of the interpretative development down to the different geographical and historical time periods, even though "a more differentiating investigation of the patristic sources might perhaps reveal regional differences."[28] A wide net cutting across a broad geographical and chronological range, while acknowledging differences in time and proximity, is thus inevitable.

The rabbinic sources investigated in this paper are the Targum on Ruth and Ruth Rabbah. The patristic treatment of the book of Ruth was significantly less thorough and only a few commentaries had been devoted entirely to the book: Isidore of Seville and Rabanus Maurus (and to a lesser degree, the earlier work of Theodoret of Cyrus) were the only ones within the time frame under consideration.

The time frame of our examination is loosely speaking, late Antiquity, from the fourth century to the early ninth century (bookended by Ambrose and Rabanus).[29] This was also a formative period for both ecclesiastical Christianity and normative Judaism, which makes the survey of the textual interaction with the shared text fascinating.[30]

3 Plausibility Test of Exegetical Encounters

From the second century, the challenges posed by gnostics, Marcionites, and perhaps even pagans, gave rise to the need for Christians to demonstrate their association with the ancient Jewish faith and, accordingly, its sacred text. Once Christianity had won the battle for retention of the Hebrew Scriptures as part of its canon, the onus was laid on subsequent generations to "read *all* parts

28 Stökl Ben Ezra, *Impact*, 334.

29 This also marked the genesis of the Carolingian age, with a surge of interest in the patristic exegetical legacy. Cf. Contreni, "Patristic," 525–526: "They constituted the first great audience for the church fathers … The ubiquity of the Bible and the elaboration of a patristically mediated biblical culture in the generations between 750 and 1000 were owed to the success of a biblical model of kingship and the currency of the notion that the Carolingians were the new Israel."

30 Accordingly, earlier works by Josephus and Hippolytus have been intentionally excluded. Further, within this surveyed period, I have also limited my choice of primary sources to those that deal extensively or primarily with the biblical text of Ruth, avoiding those which only make cursory reference to the biblical text or to the character of Ruth (such as the Babylonian Talmud, Jerome, or Paulinus of Nola). Occasional references may be made to these works (such as to Ambrose and Chrysostom, where discussions on Ruth were related to her appearance in the genealogy of Jesus), but they will not be examined extensively.

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of the Bible as meaningful and edifying."[31] Thus, appropriating an exclusive body of Jewish sacred writings and redefining the meaning in the same text – through sometimes overlapping exegetical approaches – Christians also relied on their new introduction of 'apostolic' text which added to, or altered, the meaning of the older Jewish texts.

Since Irenaeus and Origen, the Christocentric allegorical reading had been used to defend the authority of the Old Testament against its detractors and at the same time to illustrate the connection of these passages to the New Covenant established by Christ.[32] Unsurprisingly, it did not take long for the hermeneutical styles of Jews and Christians to start diverging.

As history witnessed the flourishing of Christian and Jewish exegetical literature, each religion tended to interpret the shared Bible in a way aimed at excluding the other's interpretation and thus destroying the biblical foundations of its faith, resulting in "a powerful intertextuality between the two exegetical traditions."[33] That said, this theory of polemical antagonism can be overrated. Direct contact and disputations between the two groups over dogmatic or hermeneutical questions were not likely the norm.[34] Nevertheless, dialectical hermeneutics does not rely on actual contact or disputations between Jews and Christians as long as we are able to meet the test of historical plausibility.

One key argument against the existence of exegetical encounters is the overwhelming lack of explicit reference of one group to the other. This is especially true of rabbinic writings, which do not seem to deem Christians worthy even of mention or debate. It is a well-known and puzzling fact that Christianity is openly referred to surprisingly rarely in classic rabbinic literature, despite the fact that much of those literature were composed at a time when Christianity was triumphing spectacularly in the political sphere, appropriating Palestine as a Christian holy space.[35] Even scholars who vehemently argue against direct contact or dialogue between both groups do concede that casual social contact, in all likelihood, existed.[36]

31 Clark, "Interpretive," 131.

32 Hall, *Reading*, 140.

33 Alexander, "Beginning," 1.

34 Stemberger, "Exegetical," 574–575.

35 Alexander, "Beginning," 4.

36 Acknowledging the possibility of indirect and casual contact, Stemberger "Exegetical," 574, conceded that Jewish reactions to Christianity did nevertheless exist. The examples he provided included the revision of the Septuagint, the exclusion of the Ten Commandments from the phylacteries and their removal from the daily prayer, and most notably, the development of the Jewish interpretation of Genesis 22.

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> [T]he silence should not be taken at face value: it is a 'loud' silence, a polemical ploy intended to deny Christianity the oxygen of publicity, to suggest that Christianity is an upstart movement which the Rabbis, the manifest bearers of the ancient Jewish faith founded by Moses, do not need to refute.[37]

Nevertheless, the engagement, which is profound, and the evidence, largely indirect, is to an uncomfortable degree subjective and speculative: "Christianity may well prove to be the hidden planet or the dark star whose presence we need to postulate to explain the historical trajectory of Rabbinic Judaism."[38] After all, rabbinic hermeneutics is dialogical, the idea of a dialogical encounter with a Christian reading of the text may not be completely out of line. Midrash is not linear exposition, nor a species of monological reasoning, but exegesis that presupposes or starts out from alternative readings and anticipates and encourages or provokes them in turn.[39] The very manner in which midrashic haggadah is presented, as a dialogue among the sages cutting across time, suggests a level of intertextual engagement that may well have taken into consideration unidentified Christian echoes.

4 Readings of Ruth Juxtaposed

Before launching into the primary texts proper, a remark needs to be made about the different exegetical approaches taken by each of the two groups. The rabbinic exegetical method may be characterised as 'narrative expansive',[40] filling in details in typical haggadic fashion, in our case especially on Ruth's conversion catechism. The fathers, on the other hand, apply allegorical/typological reading to show the spiritual truth beneath the story of Ruth, prefiguring the Gentile Church.[41]

Allegorical reading assumes that beneath the surface of the story is a hidden message which the story points to. The allegorical method, Greek in origin and applied in the interpretation of the Homeric myths, was perfect for reconciling an ancient classical tradition (whether a Homeric myth or antiquated biblical

37 Alexander, "Beginning," 4.
38 Ibid., 5.
39 Bruns, *Hermeneutics*, 111.
40 Beattie, *Studies*, 3–4.
41 It needs to be noted that there was no single uniform allegorical interpretation, e.g. Naomi regularly shifts between being interpreted as the Synagogue and the early/primitive Church, or even the faith of that Church. Cf. Smith, *Medieval Exegesis*, xii–xiii.

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legislation) to the Christians' new situation and new mentality.[42] The haggadic reading, on the other hand, assumes that the story has obscurities or difficulties that are to be resolved by the sages. The rabbis were probably reacting against such a Christian allegory with the talmudic principle that figurative meanings could never take the place of the plain meaning (*peshat*).[43]

The potential scope for comparison, even for a short book like Ruth, is extensive. This comparative study is thus narrowed down to two key themes: (1) Ruth's gentile status, and (2) the 'apostasy' of the minor characters – a contentious issue between Jews and Christians. By no means should this comparative work suggest that any rabbinic or patristic works were composed or redacted *primarily* for the purpose of apologetics. Rather, the polemical issues were dealt with on the periphery, when the respective author or redactor stumbled upon them.[44]

4.1 *Ruth the Moabite or Jew?*

4.1.1 Prohibition of Intermarriage

The issue of intermarriage[45] was one that was foregrounded in the Targum and Ruth Rabbah, both of which cast a negative light on Mahlon's and Chilion's marriages to non-Jews and yet sought to justify Boaz's subsequent marriage to Ruth.

> [T]hey transgressed the edict of the Memra of the Lord, and they took for themselves foreign wives, from the daughters of Moab … And because they had transgressed the edict of the Memra of the Lord by marrying into foreign nations, their days were cut short. And both Mahlon and Chilion also died on unclean soil.[46]

Ruth Rabbah likewise claimed that "[t]hey neither proselytized them, nor gave them ritual immersion, nor had the new law *Ammonite*, but not Ammonitess, *Moabite*, not Moabitess been propounded, that they should escape punishment

42 Trebolle Barrera, *Jewish*, 528.

43 Abulafia, "Bible," 628.

44 Visotzky, *Fathers*, 21.

45 Cohen, *Beginnings* (cf. pp. 249–250, 261), arrived at the conclusion that the prohibition of intermarriage was a product of the Second Temple (heightening during the Hasmonean period). This understanding of Deut 23:4 was carried forward to rabbinic times and was consistent with the assumption of Mishnah and Talmud that these verses prohibit marriage (see, for example, M. Qiddushin 4:3).

46 Tg. Ruth 1,4–5; tr. by Levine, *Aramaic*.

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on its account" (11,9). That Boaz was able to marry Ruth with impunity, while Mahlon and Chilion were punished by death for marrying Moabites, meant the Rabbis had to resolve this conundrum by explaining that originally the Mosaic law of Deuteronomy 23:4 had applied to Ammonites and Moabites of both sexes but that it had been revised to apply only to males, sometime between the deaths of Mahlon and Chilion and Ruth's marriage to Boaz, which Ruth Rabbah refers to as 'the new law'.[47] The legal difficulty surrounding this supposed 'new law' that made the slight distinction between genders suggests that the arguments used to justify the admission of Moabite women were exceedingly flimsy.[48]

Ambrose, seemingly concerned with the same difficulties, and possibly compelled by the need to justify Ruth's acceptance into the Israelite community because of her relation to David and hence to Jesus, tried to get around the problem of the prohibited intermarriage of Boaz and Ruth by redefining the law and its purpose on the basis of the apostolic principle:

> For how did Ruth, when she was a foreigner, marry a Jew? And for what reason did the Evangelist believe that this marriage, which was forbidden by the weight of the law, should be included in the genealogy of Christ? Did the Savior therefore descend from an illegitimate heritage? Unless you return to *the apostolic principle that the law was not given for the just but for the unjust*, then, his genealogy would seem to be deformed, given that Ruth was a foreigner and a Moabite, whereas the law of Moses prohibits marriage to Moabites and excludes them from the church, as it is written: "No Moabite shall enter the church of the Lord even to the third and fourth generation forever." (Deut 23:3) Hence, how did she enter the church unless because she was made holy and immaculate by deeds [moribus] that go beyond the law?[49]

Hence, Ambrose argued that Ruth's goodness transcended the boundaries of the Mosaic law. And he went further in presenting Ruth accordingly as the model which the Gentile church was to emulate in order to be suited for election to the people of God:

47 See also Tg. Ruth 11, 10–11.

48 Bamberger, *Proselytism*, 198–199.

49 Ambrose, *Commentarius in Lucam* 3 (emphasis added): Tissot, I. (ed.). 1956. Sources Chrétiennes no. 45: 136–138 (Paris).

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> For if the law was given for the irreverent and sinners, then surely Ruth, who exceeded the limits of the law and entered the church and was made an Israelite and deserved to be counted among the honored figures in the Lord's genealogy, chosen for kinship of mind, not of body, is a great example for us, because she *prefigures all of us who were gathered from the nations for the purpose of joining the church of the Lord*. We should emulate her, therefore, who merited by her deeds this privilege of being admitted to his society, as history teaches, so that we also, by our deeds and accompanying merits, might be chosen for election to the church of the Lord.[50]

This marks the earliest suggestion of Ruth as a representative of the Gentile church, although Ambrose did not primarily employ the technique of typological reading here. By the time of Rabanus Maurus, the typological reading was well advanced, to such an extent that even Mahlon and Chilion were deemed a type of the apostles, "associated with two peoples, namely the Jews and the Gentiles."[51] Being considered an allegory of 'learned men', they were treated as "the faithful people from amongst the Jews, who were the first to understand the stronghold of faith and strength of religious service."[52] Rabanus' reading is in stark contrast to the negative light cast on Mahlon and Chilion by the rabbinic sages.

Here, the deviation of the Christian reading from the rabbinic contempt for Mahlon's and Chilion's intermarriage hints that the dissonance may have been intentional. From Ambrose's reading, it is quite clear he was well aware of the prohibition against intermarriage. His softer stance towards the prohibited intermarriage may have been a reaction against the hard-line Jewish attitudes towards interactions with gentiles, which was a controversial issue known to both groups. Rabanus, having taken the argument further and deliberately elevated Mahlon's and Chilion's status and decision to marry Moabite wives – crediting them with understanding and faith for challenging the traditional Jewish bar to marrying foreigners – hints again at some awareness of the Jewish reproach of the sons of Elimelech.

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50 Ibid., emphasis added.

51 Note that any reference to Rabanus Maurus' *Commentarium in librum Ruth* (PL 108:1199C–1224A, yet to be published in English translation) is unfortunately limited to the Glossa Ordinaria's redaction of the same. Cf. PL 108:1201D; tr. by Smith, *Medieval*, 11.

52 PL 108:1202A; tr. by Smith, *Medieval*, 11.

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4.1.2 Ruth – Gentile or Jewish Proselyte

The patristic high view of Ruth's Gentile status as a type for the Gentile church was seemingly pitted against the rabbinic rationalisation of Ruth as a convert to Judaism. The Jewish reading took issue with her identity as a Moabite, but rather than criticise her Moabite identity, it emphasised the power of the Torah, to which she was converted, thereby halakhically legitimising her conversion. Both groups paid special attention to Ruth's speech in Ruth 1:16–17, arriving at different conclusions about the outcome.

Assuming a conversion process to be taking place, Ruth R. II, 12 suggests that Ruth 1:7 was referring to Naomi and Ruth "discussing the laws of proselytes." The Targum presents Ruth as the initiator, having requested to become a proselyte (Tg. Ruth I, 10). Thereafter, Ruth's speech is deemed to be her declaration of conversion and expanded by the Targumist "into a catechism of proselytism[53] in which each phrase of her speech was taken to indicate her acknowledgement and acceptance of some condition or consequence of her conversion."[54]

By the second chapter of Ruth, her status as a proselyte was established and recognised by the reapers (Tg. Ruth II, 6) and by Boaz. In response to Ruth's admission to being "of a despised people who are excluded from the congregation of the Lord",[55] Boaz affirmed:

> May the Lord reward you [greatly in this world for] your good deeds. And may you have full recompense [in the world-to-come] from before the Lord, the God of Israel, under the shadow [of whose glorious Shekinah] you have come [to be proselytised, and] to be protected.[56] [And due to that merit, may you be saved from the judgment of Gehinnom, so that your destiny will be with Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel and Leah]. And she replied, "May I find favour in your eyes, my Lord. For you have comforted

53 Cf. Cohen, *Beginnings*, 229–230: "In the fullest version of the midrash, adduced by the anonymous discussant on B. Yevamot 47b, Ruth acknowledges to Naomi her acceptance of the prohibition of exceeding the Sabbath limits, the prohibition of non-marital intimacy between men and women, the 613 commandments, the prohibition of idolatry, the four modes of execution inflicted by the high court, and the two kinds of court-supervised burial … These midrashim are based on the exegesis of Scripture, not actual practice … The conversion ceremony in Yevamot is following (or establishing) the tradition found in the midrashim on Ruth."

54 Beattie, *Studies*, 221.

55 Bamberger, *Proselytism*, 197.

56 To convert to Judaism is to take shelter under the wings of God's presence (Ruth R. V, 4).

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> me, [by pronouncing me worthy, to be acceptable in the congregation of the Lord]."[57]

In Tg. Ruth III, 10–11, where Boaz praised Ruth's "latest deed of loving-kindness [as] greater than the first", the Targumist determined the first deed as referring to her conversion.

The Rabbinic readers appear to be finding in Ruth the paradigm of the *ger tzeddek* (the righteous convert) and they went so far as to transform the biblical meaning of *ger* (stranger or resident alien) to a rabbinic meaning (convert), as well as being boldly anachronistic by finding in the biblical text the specific gestures and movements of later rituals of conversion.[58] Neusner attributes this tendency to the underlying principal point of Ruth Rabbah: how the gentile overcomes his alienation from God and becomes Israel; and the solution presented in Ruth Rabbah is by the avoidance of idolatry and acceptance of the Torah.[59]

This probably explains why the rabbis were quick to avoid giving Ruth the Moabite too much credit, by disassociating her remarkable character from her Moabite origins (Ruth R. IV, 6), crediting rather the transformative effects of the instruction in the Torah which she had received through Naomi.

Nonetheless, the prevalent reference to Ruth's Moabite origin, by way of the recurrent epithet 'Ruth the Moabitess', remains for the Rabbis, an indelible flaw upon the beauty of Ruth. This explains why they find in the commendable personality of Ruth the Moabitess a small remnant of the unchastity of Moab even after her becoming a proselytised daughter of Israel.[60]

Before moving on to the Christian treatment of Ruth's status, it is noteworthy that such understanding of Ruth as a proselyte was not alluded to in Josephus' earlier work. In *Ant*. 5.318–337, Josephus' condensed version of the story of Ruth entirely omits Ruth's decision to convert to Judaism, stating merely that Ruth could not be persuaded to remain in Moab (*Ant*. 5.322). Castelli attributes this lack of reference to conversion to Judaism and Jewish proselytism to the fact that these were delicate subjects for Josephus' audience.[61]

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57 Tg. Ruth II, 12–13a. The portions added by the Targumist to the canonical text have been identified in square brackets.

58 Kates, "Transfigured," 53–4.

59 Neusner, *Theological*, 46. Neusner presents Ruth Rabbah as making one paramount point through numerous exegetical details, its single message being "that the Torah (as exemplified by the sage) makes the outsider into an insider, the Moabite into an Israelite, the offspring of the outsider into the Messiah" (p. xxxii).

60 Kronholm, "Portrayal," 35.

61 Castelli, "Marriage," 1252. Josephus' work should not be too quickly dismissed as unrepresentative of the prevailing Jewish thought of his time. Cf. Kronholm, "Portrayal," 16: "Though it appears impossible to certify the origin of these pieces of haggadic

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However, Josephus was clearly not averse to speaking about conversion to Judaism, which he defines as the adoption of the practices and customs of the Jews (rather than the rejection of foreign gods), particularly circumcision (*Vita* 113 with 149). For him 'to adopt the customs of the Jews' and 'to be circumcised' are synonymous expressions and the acceptance of circumcision is the acceptance of Judaism.[62] If this be the case, Josephus' lack of reference to Ruth's conversion may have been because she could not be circumcised, or (which I propose to be more likely) that the notion of Ruth being a convert to Judaism was a later development that post-dated Josephus.[63]

This hypothesis is bolstered by the observation that the rabbinic halakhic approach was a marked departure from the strict Ezran and Second Temple (eg. *Jub.* 30:7–17; 20:1–4; 34:13–24 and 4QMMT B 75–82) prohibition against intermarriage and, by implication, conversion.

The holy seed ideology of Ezra and related Second Temple sources precludes the possibility of both intermarriage and conversion. The Rabbis reject Ezra's near-exclusive focus on genealogy, adopting a definition of Jewish identity that creates a permeable group boundary and the possibility of assimilation of converted foreigners.[64] In other words, the Second Temple Jewish worldview would not have been able to accommodate the concept of Ruth as a convert. It was, in all likelihood, a later rabbinic conceptualisation.

As mentioned above, Ambrose briefly suggested that Ruth was "made an Israelite." We have seen above how Ambrose reflected some degree of openness to Jewish thinking in his reading of the scriptural texts of the Old Testament. His contemporaries, however, steered clear of suggesting that Ruth was a proselyte. For instance, Theodoret,[65] in responding to the question of why the story

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information, it seems reasonable to presume that they represent fragments of a hermeneutical instruction on Ruth, current in the ancient synagogue and Beth Midrash, particularly since Josephus' account, as D.R.G. Beattie expresses it, 'is generally in tune with the exegesis of early Rabbinic Judaism'."

62 Cohen, *Beginnings*, 158.

63 That is based on the assumption that Josephus was somewhat representative of Jewish thought towards the tail end of the Second Temple period, which is not a position that has gone unchallenged. Notwithstanding that, the lack of an alternative Jewish interpretation of Ruth during the same period leaves us with no evidence that the notion of Ruth as a proselyte was a perspective held during or prior to Josephus' time.

64 Hayes, "Other," 253.

65 Bishop Theodoret of Cyrus (ca. 393–458/466) was an influential theologian and biblical commentator of the Antiochene School. His *Quaestiones in Ruth* constitutes the sole surviving, though not the first known early patristic commentary on Ruth. While he did not refer to Jewish haggadic materials in *Quaestiones in Ruth*, there is evidence of haggadic knowledge in his other texts, such as in *Quaestiones in Exodum* 25 and *Commentarius in Psalmos* 135.13 (Kamesar, "Evaluation," 52). Referring to them as 'Jewish myths' (Ἰουδαϊκοὶ μῦθοι), he nevertheless accepts that they do reflect the divine θαυματουργία. The

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of Ruth was composed, emphasised her place as a Gentile in the genealogy of Christ:

> … when he was composing the genealogy, St. Matthew passed over women such as Sarah, Rebekah, and the others, who were celebrated for their virtue, but mentioned Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and even the wife of Uriah, to teach us that God's only-begotten became man for the sake of *all human beings: both Jews and Gentiles*, sinners and saints. *Ruth was a Moabite* …[66]

Specifically, in addressing Ruth's famous speech, Theodoret explained that "Anyone could see that Ruth was also motivated by the *right religion* when she left her parents and followed her mother-in-law." What he meant by τὴν εὐσέβειαν is not clear, but it could have been a deliberate distancing from any suggestion that Ruth converted to Judaism, and classifying it more generically as piety or reverence to the divine.

Similarly, John Chrysostom, known for his anti-Jewish supersessionist tendencies, when discussing the idea of the Messiah having a foreigner as his ancestor, drew favourable attention to Ruth's foreign identity, as with the other three women in Matthew's genealogy.[67]

> Those things which happened to Ruth should be seen as figures. For she was an outsider and had fallen into extreme penury; but Boaz, seeing her, did not despise her on account of her poverty nor was he horrified on account of her impiety; even as Christ received the Church, who was both a stranger and labouring, in need of great good things. Ruth is not joined with her consort before forsaking her parents and her nation and her native land: never was anyone so much ennobled by marriage. Thus the Church was not made loveable to her spouse before she had forsaken her prior customs. The prophet says, *Forget your people* (Ps. 45:10).[68]

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exegetical style of *Quaestiones in Ruth* also betrays awareness of Jewish haggadic style: where Theodoret frames his comments based on questions, he applies logical rhetoric to argue for certain interpretations, and even refers to opposing views.

66 Theodoret, *Quaestiones in Ruth* I (1), emphasis added; the translation is taken from Hill, *Theodoret*.

67 Tamar and Rahab were Canaanites; Ruth was a Moabite, a descendent of Lot's incestuous union with a daughter, and therefore of a people singularly reviled in the law on several counts. Although Bathsheba was undoubtedly an Israelite, she was also, as the genealogy names her, the "wife of Uriah the Hittite" (2 Sam 11: 3); cf. Hawkins, "Ruth," 78–79.

68 Chrysostomus, *Homiliae in Matthaeum* 3; PG 57: 35–36, tr. by Smith, *Medieval*, 35.

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While Chrysostom acknowledged Ruth's foreign status as problematic, he did not at any point suggest that Ruth was converted in such a way that her marriage to Boaz was legitimised, but rather that Boaz did not despise that identity and accepted her, just as Christ accepted the Gentile Church. In fact, Hawkins interprets Chrysostom's reference to 'prior customs' as 'the law of Israel' and Jewish practices which was he urging his readers to forsake.[69] If Hawkins's analysis is correct, then Chrysostom's reading of Ruth not only affirms her gentile status but actually reverses the argument in criticism of the Jews.

Subsequently, Isidore of Seville took the typology of Ruth as the Gentile Church to its fullest extent:

> Now let us look at Ruth, for she is a type of the church. First she is a type because she is a stranger from the Gentile people who renounced her native land and all things belonging to it. She made her way to the land of Israel. And when her mother-in-law forbade her to come with her, she persisted, saying, 'Wherever you go, I shall go; your people shall be my people; and your God shall be my God. Whichever land receives you as you die, there I too shall die.' This voice *without doubt shows that she is a type of the church*. For the church was called to God from the Gentiles in just this way: leaving her native land (which is idolatry) and giving up all earthly associations, she confessed that he in whom the saints believed is the Lord God; and that she herself will go where the flesh of Christ ascended after his passion; and that on account of his name she would suffer in this world unto death; and that she will unite with the community of the saints, that is, the patriarchs and the prophets. This company, by virtue of which she might be joined to the longed-for saints from the lineage of Abraham, Moses revealed to us in the canticle, saying, 'Rejoice, you nations, with his people, (that is, people of the Gentiles), pour forth what you believe; exult with those who were first chosen for eternal joy.'[70]

Here, Isidore comes close to the midrashic concept, hinting at conversion, which, as he was quick to clarify, was not a conversion to Judaism per se, but union with Christ in his death and ascension. Isidore also places Ruth in the company of the patriarchs and prophets but reasserts the Christian ideology that gentiles too can be found amongst the people of God. The rest of Isidore's exposition of Ruth is centred on the marriage of Boaz and Ruth, paralleling

69 Hawkins, "Ruth," 80.

70 Tr. by Smith, *Medieval*, 7.

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it to that of Christ and the Church, stating that "the blessing of the ten elders showed that *all Gentile peoples were saved* and blessed in the name of Christ."[71]

By the high Middle Ages, this typological association between Ruth and the Gentile Church seemed quite entrenched. It was prevalent throughout the *Glossa Ordinaria*, as if that was the ubiquitous understanding of the story of Ruth. In fact, the *Glossa* tended to pit the Jewish community against the Gentile community by using Ruth as a type of the Church and Naomi as a type of the Synagogue or 'Primitive Church' (although there are inconsistencies in the typological associations). In a portion quoted from Rabanus on Ruth 2:18, he explained, "the Church shows to the Synagogue that grace which she received by the gift of her spouse, and she shows it to her mother, the Synagogue, so that it might challenge her to believe."[72]

Assuming that the concept of Ruth's proselyte status was indeed a later midrashic development, it could possibly have appeared in response to the Christian appropriation of Ruth's gentile identity to propagate the divine acceptance of gentiles. In fact, seeing Ruth as a proselyte ignores the fact that the canonical text itself makes no reference to Ruth's conversion and even much later in the story (at Ruth 4:10), her Moabite reference is retained. It also seems clear that such creative exegesis was not for the purpose of establishing halakhically the procedure and ritual for conversion (which appears to have been borrowed essentially from the Babylonian Talmud), but rather to counter the Christian arguments by setting out in no uncertain terms that Ruth, because of her conversion, was not a gentile.

The later Christian readings also appear to be responding to their Jewish pre-text. The increasingly aggressive assertion of Ruth's gentile status, in which she served as a typological representation of the Gentile Church, welcomed and accepted by God through her marriage to Christ (represented by Boaz), seems to indicate some awareness of the rabbinic contention of Ruth's proselyte status. Despite the challenges in the availability and historical plausibility tests, the satisfaction test seems to have been met, as such an intertextual understanding of the texts provides a useful explanation for the shifts in understanding within both communities over time.

4.2 *Against Apostasy*

Apart from the perplexing question of Ruth's identity and status, another revealing piece of evidence of the potential encounter between Jewish and

71 Ibid., 7, emphasis added.

72 PL 108:1209C–D; tr. by Smith, *Medieval*, 19.

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Christian exegesis must not be overlooked. Quite a bit of commentary was made out of Boaz's instruction to Ruth to remain in his field (Ruth 2:8):

> Then Boaz said to Ruth, "Hearest thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in another field" (II, 8) as in the verse, *Thou shalt have no other gods before me* (Ex. xx, 3). Neither pass from hence, compare *This is my God, and I will glorify him* (Ex. xv, 2).[73]

Ruth Rabbah gave heavy weight to Boaz's words in making his instructions echo the divine command to Israel. Moreover, in Ruth R. *Proem* I, there is a clear affirmation of Israel's exclusive relationship with God, and this sentiment seems to undergird the rest of Ruth Rabbah (emphasis added):

> R. Simeon b. Yohai taught: I am God to all the inhabitants of the world, but I *have associated My name only with my people Israel*. I am not called the God of the nations, only the God of Israel.

Aligned with this reading, the Targum interprets 'the other field' as 'another people' (Tg. Ruth II, 8). Given the Targum's extolment of Ruth as a representative of the true proselyte and ancestor of David and the Messiah, Boaz's instruction was consequently a warning against apostasy, for according to Jewish law, a relapsed proselyte was an apostate no less guilty than a born Jew who had crossed over to another religion.[74]

By the same token, the Christian readers also picked up on this as a potential warning against apostasy. Rabanus explained:

> 'Do not go to another field' meaning 'do not leave the state of faith, lest you follow the errors of the heretics or schismatics' but rather join with the minds of the saints, so that you fear the holy Scriptures, meditating on them, and fulfilling them by deeds. And having drunk divine wisdom from the books of the two Testaments, from which the young people (that is to say, the saints) drink, you may drink of it too.[75]

Whilst conversion to the other religion would certainly be deemed apostasy by both the Jews and the Christians, it is not possible to be definitive as to whether the rabbis or Rabanus had in mind specifically conversion to Judaism

73 Ruth R. IV, 7.

74 Levine, *Aramaic*, 71. See also Josephus, *C. Ap.* II, 10, 123.

75 PL 108:1207C–D; tr. by Smith, *Medieval*, 17.

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or Christianity respectively, or just apostasy more generally. Be that as it may, Rabanus' subsequent reference to drawing from *sicque haustum sapientiae divinae ex ibris duorum Testamentorum* could possibly be a covert reference to Jews who only draw from one and not the other.

On the theme of apostasy, there was one deviation in Ruth Rabbah from the Targum that is worth probing and that is their treatment of the character of Orpah, Elimelech, and his sons.[76] In the Targum, Elimelech was simply referred to as 'a great man from Bethlehem in Judah'.[77] Little was done to explain his reasons for leaving except for the severity of the famine, one of the ten famines that were to plague the earth.

This was a point that Jerome may have picked up from his Jewish associates, emphasising the involuntariness of Elimelech's migration: "the famine grew worse, and he who seemed foremost in the tribe of Judah was not only expelled from his native land with his wife and sons, made helpless by famine, but even continued in that same exile with his sons".[78]

This makes the contrast in Ruth Rabbah, which cast Elimelech in the worst possible light striking. There were extensive debates between the rabbis over their leaving Bethlehem for the fields of Moab:

> But we have learnt: A man should not leave Palestine unless two *se'ahs* [of wheat] cost a shekel? And Rabban Simeon b. Gamaliel said: When is this? When even then it is difficult to obtain, but if it is possible to obtain even one *se'ah* for a shekel, a Jew should not leave Palestine? Why then was Elimelech punished? Because he struck despair into the hearts of Israel. He was like a prominent man who dwelt in a certain country, and the people of that country depended upon him and said that if a dearth should come he could supply the whole country with food for ten years … He was one of the notables of his place and one of the leaders of his generation. But when the famine came he said, 'Now all Israel will come knocking at my door [for help], each one with his basket.' He therefore arose and fled from them.[79]

76 The arguments that the Targum pre-dates Ruth Rabbah are cogent and it is the working assumption of this study. Levine, *Aramaic*, 8–10, supports this argument on the basis that the former is simpler and less developed, and Kronholm, "Portrayal," 17, observes that "[m]uch of the haggadic material briefly recorded or merely intimated in the Targum to Ruth recurs in Ruth Rabbah in extenso".

77 Tg. Ruth 1, 1.

78 Jerome, *Quaestiones Hebraicae in Paralipomenon*; PL 23:1373; tr. by Smith *Medieval*, 31.

79 Ruth R. 1, 4.

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Kronholm thinks that the antipathy towards Elimelech was inspired by the existing views concerning apostasy and proselytism in Talmudic times and a gradually stiffening rabbinic orthodoxy, particularly in the third to the fifth centuries CE.[80] Mahlon and Chilion were dragged into the same mire: "philological subtlety, and no legends proper, enabled the Rabbis to classify Mahlon and Chilion among the enemies of Israel and dress them in the heretic's caps of post-biblical Judaism."[81] Even Orpah was not spared. Regarded as a prototype of anybody confronted with the Torah and rejecting it, refusing to become a proselyte, Ruth Rabbah went so far as to make Orpah the first mother of the Philistines (arch-enemies of Israel) as a result of a gang-rape she suffered after leaving Naomi.[82] Orpah was treated by Ruth Rabbah as the model of apostasy, antithesis of Ruth, the model proselyte.[83]

This invites curiosity as to what could have prompted such a hostile approach to these characters, going beyond what the author of Ruth conveyed. Neither the presumably earlier Targumist nor the patristic writers saw the need for such antagonism towards these minor characters. There could have been something going on in the social text (underlying the literal text), what the editors of Ruth Rabbah were opposing. With this in mind, we move on to uncover the social text for the possible reasons behind the seemingly polemical exegesis.

5 Socio-rhetorical Reading

Robbins' socio-rhetorical approach observes interaction between the study of the texts and the world of those who composed them.[84] While the geographical and chronological space between us and the patristic-rabbinic writers necessarily allows us some room for disinterested observations to be made, it also simultaneously poses a huge challenge to try to probe the past experiences of the exegetes. This section attempts to map the socio-historical milieu within which these exegetes operated, paying special attention to the Jewish-Christian controversy on conversion and proselytism, in order to enhance our understanding of their exegesis and the nature of their mutual encounter in reading Ruth.

80 Kronholm, "Portrayal," 27, 42.
81 Ibid., 28.
82 Ibid., 33: Ruth R. II, 20.
83 Ibid., 34.
84 Robbins, *Exploring*.

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5.1 *'Christianisation' of the Roman Empire*

One of the key turning points of the period under consideration was Constantine's final conquest of Israel in 324 CE and the 'edict' of Milan in 313 CE which made Christianity *religio licita*. From then on, history witnessed a continual advance of Christianity that seemingly put Judaism increasingly on the defensive. By 425 CE, the laws against polytheists, Jews, and heretics had congealed into a system which made religious adherence a requirement for the full enjoyment of the benefits of Roman society.[85] This so-called Christianisation of the empire, while having a limited impact, nevertheless altered the fabric of Roman society and the interactions between the adherents of different religions.

It was in such a context that the key rabbinic texts under consideration flourished. Despite being branded a 'mad impiety',[86] the Jewish communities were not the key subjects of programmatic state-directed persecution but were instead given the assurance that it was 'not a sect prohibited by the laws'.[87] Nevertheless, they witnessed the apparent triumphalism of their sister religion, which had by this period become increasingly estranged from its Jewish roots. It would, then, be unsurprising for Jewish rhetoric to react to such a political phenomenon and yet have to remain subtle and covert about any incriminating allusions. Regardless of the power imbalance, and because of their commonality, both groups would inevitably be engaged in a hegemonic struggle for the universal status of their beliefs, worldviews, and interpretation of biblical truth.[88]

5.2 *Jewish Proselytism and Christian Conversions*

Kessler suggests that if it can be shown that Jews were not involved in active mission, the argument against an ongoing encounter is greatly strengthened.[89] However, the lack of active missionary activities on the part of the Jews is not necessarily conclusive regarding the presence of an encounter. Even if the Jewish leadership was not motivated by a desire to win converts, their polemic may well have been targeted at preventing Jewish apostates in response to the threat of active Christian missionary efforts, or to win back to Judaism those

85 Brown, "Christianization," 638.

86 Codex Theodosianus 15.5.5.

87 Ibid., 16.8.9.

88 Fairclough, *Analysing*, 45.

89 Kessler, *Bound*, 14: "One of the by-products of the study of polemic is an examination of proselytism and its role in Jewish-Christian relations in late antiquity. If, for example, it can be shown that Jews were not involved in active mission, alongside Christians, the argument against an ongoing encounter is greatly strengthened."

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Jews who had defected to Christianity.[90] The debate on the extent of Jewish proselytism in late Antiquity, which remains wide-ranging and contradictory, need not be resolved for our purposes. Nevertheless, there is sufficient evidence of non-Jews following Jewish practices, or even outright conversions, as seen in Christian council texts, the *Codex Theodosianus*, and other secular laws. Discussions in the Talmud (as well as Ruth haggadah) concerning conversions seem to underline this postulation.[91] Evaluating the pagan, imperial, Christian, and Jewish sources of late Antiquity, Feldman concludes that 'Judaising' tendencies were particularly strong in Judaea, Syria, and Asia Minor, as well as all the parts of the Roman Empire, including Spain and North Africa.[92]

It leads to the question whether the anti-Judaism of many early Christian texts was the result of such social competition between Jews and Christians, or whether it is a function of internal self-definition, especially for Christians of the second century trying to sort out exactly what Christianity is and is not.[93] In fact, these possibilities are not mutually exclusive. As the rabbinic and patristic texts are re-examined against this socio-political backdrop, it appears that their respective readings have been angled towards some rivalry and definition of boundaries.

In pre-rabbinic times, conversion to Judaism was entirely a private affair. Conversions and circumcisions were not supervised or overseen by anyone, and there was no conversion ceremony. The creation of the rabbinic conversion ceremony turned conversion into a public affair.[94] This could have been a result of the cultural environs that witnessed the creation and expansion of numerous conversion, initiation, and other such rituals in the Roman Empire.[95] It could also have been due to a perceived need to define identity markers more clearly, whether one be Jew or Christian, pagan or monotheist.

The prerequisites for conversion were also enhanced subsequently. First-century sources (such as Philo) suggest that where a gentile woman married a Jewish man, the act of marriage to a Jewish husband was *de facto* an act of conversion. There was no ritual of conversion. What is, however, presented in the later rabbinic texts, suggests an entirely different system, including a

90 This inclination is apparent from the remarkably conciliatory saying of the third-century Rabbi Simeon ben Lakish (Hagigah 27a, 'Eruvin 19a) that the fire of Gehenna has no dominion over Jewish apostates, who are as full of good deeds as a pomegranate (Feldman, *Jew*, 411).

91 Feldman, *Jew*, 413–415.

92 Ibid., 405.

93 Cohen, *Maccabees*, 238.

94 Cohen, *Beginnings*, 223.

95 Ibid., 211.

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conversion ritual for women, which entails three elements replacing circumcision: practice of the Jewish laws, exclusive devotion to the God of the Jews, and integration into the Jewish community.[96] It is no coincidence that all three elements had been read into the canonical text of Ruth in the midrashic literature examined.

Martin Goodman attributes these observable changes in rabbinic attitudes towards proselytism to "one obvious factor between 70 CE and the third century." Rabbis in Palestine were by then well aware of the success of Christianity in winning pagans away from idolatry. In time, the assumptions of rivals with whom debate and discussions were not uncommon may have been adopted, perhaps unconsciously, by the Rabbis themselves.[97] "[F]ar from withdrawing into itself or restricting itself to a conflict built around the interpretation of sacred texts, Judaism boldly confronted the Church",[98] responding with similar aggression to shield its people from Christian heresies and active proselytism.

The corresponding patristic reaction against conversion to Judaism, especially of Christians, was already discussed above. Apart from the examples of John Chrysostom and the council texts,[99] what is most telling was the Christian influence on the imperial laws.[100]

That forty-three percent of the laws pertaining to the Jews in the *Codex Theodosianus* deal with proselytism in one form or another probably indicates the continuing presence of the problem even as late as the fifth century.[101] Given this socio-political context of the period leading up to the fifth century, Jewish-Christian disputations relating to conversions probably featured prominently.

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96 Ibid., 156.

97 Goodman, *Mission*, 152.

98 Feldman, *Jew*, 414.

99 In another patent reference to Jewish conversion, the homily *On Dreams* (ca. 614), Antiochus the Monk argued against the disastrous effects of Christian conversion to Judaism and that it was a result of the devil's ploy. Cf. Cohen, *Beginnings*, 166.

100 The best known being the one issued in 329 CE by Emperor Constantine (*Codex Theodosianus* 16.8.1), seventeen years after his vision of the cross: "if one of the people [whether pagans or Christians] shall approach their [i.e. the Jews'] nefarious (*nefariam*) sect and join himself to their conventicles [i.e. synagogues], he shall suffer with them the deserved punishments." Another noteworthy piece of imperial legislation was the one issued in 388 CE by the Emperors Valentinian II, Theodosius I, and Arcadius (*Codex Theodosianus* 3.7.2 and 9.7.5), which forbade intermarriage between Jews and Christians, with the same penalty to be applied as in cases of adultery [i.e. death]. Cf. Feldman, *Jew*, 387–388.

101 Feldman, *Jew*, 414.

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5.3 *Pentecost versus Shavuot*

Comparative studies of Jewish-Christian liturgies and festivals are also illuminating with regard to later association of the book of Ruth with the Jewish festival of Shavuot. Information about Shavuot is rather scanty and by most Jews it is understood as the 'Feast of Weeks' (חג שבועות), marking a traditional remembrance of the giving of the Torah. During Shavuot, the scroll of Ruth is read in the synagogue. One obvious connection is that the story of Ruth takes place during the barley harvest, which culminates in the Feast of Weeks. The second, and less apparent, link is that the Feast of Weeks commemorates the giving of the Law, and Ruth is regarded as the proselyte *par excellence*, who accepts the law unreservedly.

That the scroll of Ruth is to be read during Shavuot is not actually mentioned in Ruth Rabbah or the Targum, but it was first recorded in the post-Talmudic tractate *Soferim* (XIV, 8, 8). The lack of any mention of such a practice in both the Targum and Ruth Rabbah probably suggests that this customary association had not yet become prevalent. What would, however, feature in the minds of the sages is the identification of Shavuot with the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai.[102]

Just as the Jewish people accept all the commandments of the Torah during Shavuot, so Ruth willingly accepts the obligations of the covenant with the God of Israel. In this reading, she is understood as a convert to Judaism, a concept that arose not earlier than in rabbinic Judaism. By that very act, in choosing an irrevocable commitment, she also becomes a personification of the people of Israel at Sinai.[103] It would appear that the association of Shavuot with the giving of the Torah was more likely to have preceded the custom of reading Ruth during the festival. Perhaps it was a result of the haggadic ideas of Ruth as a proselyte who willingly accepted the Torah that the story was drawn in as part of the festival.

This could possibly account for the lack of any association between Ruth and the Christian festival of Pentecost (which was an offshoot from the Feast of Weeks). My argument is that Ruth's association with Shavuot was a much later development, after the festival of Pentecost evolved antithetically among Christians.

At least from the second half of the fourth century onwards, some Church Fathers were aware of the Jewish tradition that ascribes the giving of the Torah

102 Kronholm, "Portrayal," 15.

103 Kates, "Women," 188–189.

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to Shavuot. Theologically, the giving of the Spirit on Pentecost is contrasted through typology with the giving of the Torah on Shavuot.[104]

Although a thorough survey of the intersection of Shavuot and Pentecost must be left outside the scope of this study, it is notable that the Shavuot remembrance of the giving of the Torah and the reading of the scroll of Ruth (as the model proselyte to Judaism) can be juxtaposed with the Pentecost celebration of the giving of the Spirit, marked by an account of the mass conversion of thousands of Jews to Christianity (Acts 2). Here, the Christians applied their supersessionist principles in challenging the Jewish notion of divine revelation and conversion. Unsurprisingly, it probably generated a response in the form of a parody on Pentecost in the *Yerushalmi*, which dealt particularly with the theme of boundaries and their traversing between the Jews and others.[105]

By inference, during late Antiquity, there seem to have been heightened sensitivities surrounding issues of apostasy, conversion, and boundary markers, something that both groups (as shown above) intentionally brought into their exegesis of Ruth.

6 Concluding Thoughts

The notion that by the early second century CE, Jews and Christians constituted separate communities, each with its own identity, rituals, institutions, authority figures, and literature, was "once regnant among scholars."[106] The lack of explicit references in Jewish and Christian exegeses to those of the other side had for a long time led to a staunch belief that both groups remained largely isolated and rarely engaged with one another, even for apologetic purposes. The socio-historical setting in late Antiquity makes this presumption of isolation baffling. This premise has been increasingly challenged as evidence suggesting hidden transcripts emerge.

104 Stökl Ben Ezra, "Ancient," 282. The earliest attestation might have been Ambrosiaster (366–384), who is well known for his acquaintance with many Jewish traditions (*quaestiones veteris et novi testament*). Other examples: Jerome PL 22:707d–708a, Augustine *Ep.* 55.16 (29) NPNF, and especially Leo the Great (see Stökl Ben Ezra, "Ancient," 283). Jewish references to the Christian Pentecost are also not unknown and were referred to in Toledot Yeshu (Stökl Ben Ezra, "Ancient," 284).

105 Ibid., 289. In this parody, a reference was made to usury and pig-breeding, both of which have been traditionally likened to apostasy by the rabbis. The work is thus deliberately concerned with defining the boundaries between insiders and outsiders.

106 Cohen, *Maccabees*, 254.

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With more scholarly attempts at unearthing hidden polemics in Jewish-Christian texts, there is now more receptivity towards the implicit presence of exegetical encounters. That notwithstanding, such exercises remain inescapably subjective and speculative, and recourse certainly needs to be made to circumstantial evidence to determine the plausibility of exegetical contact. This brief survey of the early Jewish and Christian texts suggests that the Christian authors were likely to have had some working knowledge of Jewish exegesis, given their geographical proximity or theological inclinations. While the same is difficult to argue for the Jewish sources, since they were not composed by individual authors, the cultural and social intertexture nevertheless favours the argument that given the dominance of Christian subculture, access to, and awareness of, the prevailing Christian rhetoric would not be hard to fathom. Moreover, given the sensitivities relating to the issues of conversion and proselytism, coupled with the threat posed by those who obscure boundaries and identity markers between the two communities, there are sound bases for contending that pre-emptive polemical encounters via the book of Ruth were indeed within the bounds of possibility.

I have illustrated how Ruth's Moabite status and the problem of intermarriage were brought to the fore by the readings of both sides. Jewish readings quite smoothly worked out a way to extrapolate from the narrative a conversion story that consequently overcame the hurdle of marriage to Boaz. Christian readings, on the other hand, held fast to Ruth's gentile identity and conveniently relied on that as an affirmation of divine acceptance of the Gentile Church, culminating in her marriage to Christ. The canonical story does not seem to resolve the issue either way, having left Ruth's status ambiguous throughout the story. Neither reading could reasonably be said to be a logical deduction from the story itself, but must have been responding to extraneous concerns that lay beyond pure exegetical interests. Such an intertextual reading of both sets of texts does provide a more satisfactory explanation of the exegetical moves made by each respectively.

What is more revealing was the departure of Ruth Rabbah from the presumably earlier Targumist ambivalence surrounding Elimelech, his sons and Orpah. These characters became associated with some form of apostasy and were censured respectively for abandoning the land of Israel for unclean soil, marrying foreign wives, and rejecting conversion when presented with the opportunity. This inexplicable shift can be accounted for when mapped against the social text of the period during which Ruth Rabbah was likely to have been composed or redacted. With the increasing threat posed by the Christianisation of the Roman Empire, proselytism and apostasy were delicate issues and it would

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be difficult to imagine that the rabbinic sages were oblivious and impervious to the socio-political circumstances they found themselves in.

Despite not being able to trace with precision the hermeneutical development, due to dating and authorship difficulties, there remains a compelling case for identifying an exegetical encounter in the Jewish-Christian readings of Ruth. More specifically, the literary text read against the social text provides more weighty evidence of Jewish reaction against a Christian reading than the converse. Whilst there may have been Jewish echoes in the patristic exegeses, the tendency, especially of the earlier works, was more borrowing than polemic. The early patristic readings appear to have been prompted more by the need for self-determination of the Christian identity in relation to the Jewish Scriptures than by polemical response to the Jews. The later writers such as Isidore and Rabanus, probably affected by the social changes, tend to display slightly more belligerence and intentionally maintained a distance from the Jewish perspectives of Ruth. Yet in all the Christian writings, the tendency to uphold Ruth's gentile status appears to result more from the need for self-affirmation than that for rebutting Jewish teachings, although that could nevertheless have been a secondary purpose.

Jewish readings, on the other hand, gave no credence whatsoever to Christian (mis)appropriation of 'their' Scriptures. There is no sense of favourable treatment of Christian exegesis. On the contrary, what underlay a lot of the polemic is the determination to refute the erroneous Christian construal of biblical truths, particularly where the exclusivity of Israel's election was put to question. Hence, that dominant idea undergirds much of the rabbinic exegesis on Ruth, presenting her as a proselyte who found acceptance amongst the congregation of God's chosen people.

Scholarly efforts at unearthing similar historical Jewish-Christian exegetical encounters continue to have contemporary significance partially because modern exegesis remains to some extent grounded in deeply entrenched traditional interpretations. Not only does a comparative study that gives due attention to other exegetical tradition enrich one's own understanding of the text, it also provides a starting point for interfaith engagement. It helps us to appreciate the subtleties involved in negotiating a group's identity vis-à-vis the other, especially when the encounter is through a shared text.

At the same time, a historical comparative study also presents itself as a mirror for the modern reader: to re-evaluate one's own assumptions and theological lenses when approaching the text. It is easy to critique from a safe distance the exegetical methods and approaches of late antiquity. But it should prompt

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a reflective and critical reader to question his own blind spots and presuppositions that are brought into the text as did the ancient exegetes.

"Every collective identity is built and rebuilt in a continuous process encompassing exchange with as well as distinction from other optional collective identities in the vicinity."[107] The exegetical encounter between early Jews and Christians was itself a part of the process undertaken by leaders and exegetes of both groups to engage in the formation of identity, a process that we continue to participate in and would thus do well to learn about from our predecessors.

107 Stökl Ben Ezra, "Ancient," 279.

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'Do Not Submit Again to a Yoke of Slavery'

Liberation in Christ as a 'New Exodus' in Paul's Letter to Galatians

Peter Cimala

> I am the LORD, and I will free you from the burdens of the Egyptians and deliver you from slavery to them. I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment.
>
> Exod 6:6 NRSV

> I am the LORD your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be their slaves no more; I have broken the bars of your yoke and made you walk erect.
>
> Lev 26:13 NRSV

> For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.
>
> Gal 5:1 NRSV

1 Introduction

In his 1948 monograph, W.D. Davies referred to the Apostle Paul as a herald and preacher of a new exodus: "he was the *kéryx* not of a new mystery but of a new Exodus and all that that implied."[1] Elsewhere, he elaborates on this idea as follows:

> Paul was the preacher of a New Exodus wrought by the 'merit' of Christ who was obedient unto death, but this New Exodus like the Old was constitutive of community, it served to establish the New Israel …[2]

1 Davies, *Paul*, 108.

2 Davies, *Paul*, 323.

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In his study, which can in many respects be perceived as ground-breaking,[3] Davies finds support for his claim in a number of Paul's statements. He has a special regard for the passage from 1 Cor 10:1–10, but the passages discussed by Davies do not include the verse from Gal 5:1, which will be examined in the present chapter. The same author pursued this theme further in his later study *Paul and New Exodus* (1997), where he considers a wider set of verses in which he finds the motif of exodus in Paul's epistles. He argues that "… for Paul, there was a real correspondence between the Christian Dispensation and the Exodus of Israel from Egypt. The redemption of Old Israel was the prototype of the greater redemption from sin wrought by Christ for New Israel."[4] However, Davies focused at the beginning of his study on 1 Cor 10:1–10 as the most important passage for this subject, suggesting that there are several other statements in Paul's letters influenced by the idea of Christian conversion as a new exodus. In his later work,[5] he explicitly mentions the motif of freedom in Gal 5:1, without however, pursuing any detailed exegetical and theological analysis.[6]

The aim of this chapter is to reconsider Galatians 5:1 against the background of the recent developments in Pauline research, especially with respect to intertextuality, and so to develop the insights of earlier studies.[7] Although we limit ourselves to Galatians 5:1, we will also touch on a broader issue related to one of the disputes within 'the freedom controversy',[8] namely, the origin of the concept of freedom in the theology and thinking of the Apostle Paul. We will seek to explore not only the connection of Gal 5:1 with the 'new exodus' motif, neglected by Davies, but also the question related to the intertextual reference[9] of the verse, namely, whether Galatians 5:1 can be rightly termed as an echo or a thematic parallel – in order to specify its position within a broad spectrum of different intertextual links to Old Testament sources.

3 On the impact of Davies and the current state of research on the motif see Smith, "Uses".

4 Davies, "New Exodus," 443–447.

5 Davies, "New Exodus," 445.

6 Davies, "New Exodus," 443–463.

7 See two major monographs: Jones, *Freiheit*, and Vollenweider, *Freiheit*.

8 Dautzenberg, "Streit". See the research overview by Coppins, *Interpretation*, 18–33.

9 To the term 'intertextuality' in Pauline research see Porter, "Techniques". I use the notion 'intertextuality' (with S.E. Porter, R.B. Hays or S. Moyise), whereas some other scholars prefer the term 'inner-Biblical exegesis' (e.g. G.K. Beale).

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2 Liberation in Christ and the Threat of Return to Slavery (Gal 5:1)

Galatians 5:1 is according to many interpreters a climactic statement or a summary of the whole message of the Letter to the Galatians.[10] There is often a risk with such well-known and quoted biblical verses that they may be extracted and interpreted as slogans with no regard to the original setting. Therefore, to understand Paul's *eleutheria*-statement[11] as one particular argument within the framework of the letter and its overall argumentation, we will at first try to outline the story behind the epistle.

2.1 *The Outline of the Story in Galatia*

The following table shows the stages of the story (on the left) and the 'salvation process' from the perspective of slavery-freedom (on the right):

A.	Original pagan background of the converts *Formerly, when you did not know God, you were enslaved to beings that by nature are not gods* (Gal 4:8)	ENSLAVEMENT: LIFE WITHOUT CHRIST
B.	Reception of the Gospel – salvation by grace/faith *called you in the grace of Christ* (Gal 1:6) varied soteriological language: *redemption, justification, adoption, sonship or liberation …*	LIBERATION: THROUGH/IN CHRIST
C.	Life in Christ (participation in Christ) *baptism* (Gal 3:26–29) *receiving of the Spirit from God* (Gal 3:2.4) *… you were running well* (Gal 5:7)	NEW LIFE: FREEDOM IN CHRIST
D.	Another gospel and confusion caused by these opponents (crisis) *… there is another gospel, but there are some who are confusing you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ* (Gal 1:7) *You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you?* (Gal 3:1)	FREEDOM IN PERIL

10 Dunn, *Galatians*, 260.

11 Greek ἐλευθερία – freedom. By the phrase *eleutheria*-statements we cover all statements containing the ἐλευθερ- derivatives.

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E.	The epistle: Paul's written reaction and appeal the series of arguments for the Gospel without observation of the Torah as the condition for salvation (e.g. circumcision) *My little children, for whom I am again in pain* (Gal 4:19) Gal 5:1 as the climactic statement: 1a *For freedom Christ has set us free.* 1b *Stand firm, therefore,* *and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery*	FREEDOM IN CHRIST OR RETURN TO SLAVERY?
F.	Open future of the Galatians *I am afraid that my work for you may have been wasted* (Gal 4:11) *You who want to be justified by the law have cut yourselves off from Christ; you have fallen away from grace* (Gal 5:4)	???

2.2 *The Semantic Field of Liberation/Freedom in Galatians*

The *eleutheria*-statements in Galatians belong to the broader semantic field of freedom/liberation. Assuming that the verse Gal 5:1 represents the climax or a summary of the whole epistle, it is important to review briefly what preceded it (Gal 1:1–4:31).

> Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to set us free from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father.
>
> Gal 1:3–4 NRSV

Already the opening verses of the epistle indicate: (a) the relevance of liberation motif in Paul's argumentation and in the soteriology of the letter:[12] *set us free from the present evil age*; (b) the context of the redemption of mankind in Christ: *who gave himself for our sins … according to the will of God and Father*, which is understood as an eschatological event within Israel's story. The language of liberation permeates the whole epistle:

– rescue, deliver: ἐξαιρέω (Gal 1:4),
– freedom in Christ: ἐλευθερία (Gal 2:4),
– redemption: ἐξαγοράζω (Gal 3:13; 4:5),

12 On the soteriology of the letter cf. Söding, "Freiheit"; Cimala, "Soteriology".

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– freedom and sonship: ἐλεύθερος and τέκνα (Gal 4:26.31); 2 times *eleutheria*-statement: free Jerusalem is our mother (v. 26), children of the free woman (v. 31),
– freedom: ἐλευθερία (Gal 5:13) – 2 times.

There are more passages, where the motif of freedom is implied; for example, the pair of *slave–son* (Gal 4:7), namely, a free son who has received the Spirit. We can find four explicit metaphors in verses Gal 4:5–7: *redemption*, *adoption*, *sonship*, and *inheritance*, as well as an implicit metaphor of *freedom* in opposition to *slavery*. To pursue further explorations of intertextual relationships, it is important to recognise that Paul was also able to give expression to the liberation in Christ without using *eleutheria*-statements.

2.3 *Galatians 5:1 as a Permanent* Crux Interpretum

Disputed questions that call for explanation in a detailed analysis include: (a) relationship to the previous context of Gal 4:21–31 and delimitation of the statement 5:1, (b) putting the passage in the broader context of the letter with possible beginnings of the parenesis either in Gal 5:1 or in 5:13, (c) relationship between the two similar statements on freedom (Gal 5:1 and 5:13), (d) evaluation of the textual variants, (e) grammatical issue of the dative case and of a translation of Gal 5:1a, (f) theological meaning of freedom as specifically 'freedom from circumcision' and 'freedom from the Law in general' or freedom in a broader sense, (g) clarifying the ideological background of the motif of liberation. With respect to the purpose of this chapter, we must limit ourselves to several exegetical remarks and will concentrate on the last point, viz. examining the background behind the *eleutheria*-statement.[13]

2.4 *Exegetical Remarks*

2.4.1 5:1a Τῇ ἐλευθερίᾳ ἡμᾶς Χριστὸς ἠλευθέρωσεν

A compound sentence featuring an *eleutheria*-statement opens a passage rounded up by another such statement in Gal 5:13: "For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another." (Gal 5:13 NRSV) There is a consensus that in both these statements (vv. 1 and 13), there is a soteriological claim, unlike in the literal use of the freedom terminology in the pair *slave–free* (Gal 3:28).[14]

13 For a more detailed interpretation cf. Betz, *Galatians*, 253–258; Longenecker, *Galatians*, 220–225; Dunn, *Galatians*, 260–263, or Mussner, *Galaterbrief*, 342–345.

14 Soteriological *eleutheria*-statements in Gal 2:4; 4:31 and 5:1.13; thus Dunn, *Theology of Paul*, 328 n. 53.

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In the phrase "we were *liberated to freedom*", the aorist ἠλευθέρωσεν refers to a salvific event in the past. In this way, the apostle summarises the result of the work of Christ and the phrase can be understood as an expression of a direction, a purpose, or a goal. Paul does not use here a prepositional construction of ἀπό + genitive as in other places (cf. Rom 6:18.22; 8:2.21), but rather a construction with the dative case (τῇ ἐλευθερίᾳ … ἠλευθέρωσεν). While e.g. in Rom 8:2 the agent of enslavement is explicitly mentioned, and so the nature of liberation is specified, in Gal 5:1 the issue of the enslaver or the enslaving power remains rather ambivalent and allows more interpretations. Traditionally, it is believed that Paul has in mind freedom from the Law.[15] In any case, it is clear that the statement presupposes some act of liberation, a transfer from the realm of slavery to the realm of freedom.

2.4.2 5:1b στήκετε οὖν καὶ μὴ πάλιν ζυγῷ δουλείας ἐνέχεσθε

In contrast to the indicative statement in 5:1a, the second part of the verse is evidently exhortative and cautionary – this is clear from both the verbs and the metaphors used. Dominant are two imperatives framing the whole statement: στήκετε οὖν and μὴ … ἐνέχεσθε. The first verb means 'to stand', but also 'to be firm' or 'to continue', with emphasis on firmness and perseverance – which evokes some kind of attack and opposition. In our case the rendering *stand firm* (NRSV, NIV) is probably appropriate. There is evidence in Paul's usage of construing imperative with ἐν + dative[16] in appeal to firmness and faithfulness.[17] The other verb (μὴ ἐνέχεσθε) has the opposite meaning 'to fall' or 'to fail', it can also be used in the figurative sense (e.g. in Rom 14:4).[18] In this second imperative Paul warns the Galatians 'not to be burdened' (NIV) or *submit again to a yoke of slavery*.

The motif of slavery and enslavement appears repeatedly throughout the letter as the opposite or threatening of *freedom in Christ* (cf. Gal 2:4). The term ζυγός – 'burden' or 'yoke' – used here as an opposite of freedom also belongs to the semantic field of slavery, but appears only here in the letter.[19] Originally, the term referred to a wooden piece worn by animals or slaves while working

15 Challenged by Jones, "Freiheit," 100; cf. more recent critical evaluation by Coppins, *Interpretation*, 114–115.

16 For example 1 Cor 16:13; Gal 5:1; Phil 1:27; 4:1; 1 Thess 3:8; 2 Thess 2:15 – without a preposition.

17 Stay firm in the Lord (1 Thess 3:8); but also unity – stand firm in one Spirit (Phil 1:27); stand firm in your faith (1 Cor 16:13).

18 Cf. BDAG – it can acquire a transcendental or moral meaning; cf. Rom 11:11.

19 Cf. 1 Tim 6:1: the yoke of slavery.

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in the fields.[20] In the classic Greek texts as well as in the OT, it is used in a figurative sense, referring to slavery or hard physical labour (Sir 40:1). In the OT, it often appears in the context of statements about liberation, as a graphic expression of enslavement and oppression, e.g. in 2 Chr 10:4 (NRSV):

> Your father made our yoke heavy (ζυγὸν ἡμῶν). Now therefore lighten the hard service of your father (ἀπὸ τῆς δουλείας τοῦ πατρός) and his heavy yoke that he placed on us, and we will serve you (δουλεύσομέν).

The slavery that Paul warns against can be specified in more detail on the basis of the adverb πάλιν ('again') in the middle of the sentence.[21] According to Paul, they had once been slaves (4:9),[22] were liberated by Christ (5:1a), and now are in danger of being enslaved again (5:1b). The "again" as used by the apostle could refer (a) to the same kind of enslavement or (b) to a new, different kind of enslavement that would however lead to *the same result*. Had Paul used the image of the yoke of slavery to refer to the Jewish Law, how would it be connected to the past of the Gentile Christians? In Gal 4:9, the construction of πάλιν + slavery appears twice:

> Now, however, that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again (πάλιν) to the weak and beggarly elemental spirits? How can you want to be enslaved to them again (πάλιν ἄνωθεν δουλεύειν θέλετε)?
>
> Gal 4:9 NRSV

Considering the background of this passage, one can assume that the first or original enslavement referred to the "powers" (Gal 4:9: στοιχεῖα), while the new enslavement refers to the supplementary effort to submit to the Law (i.e. *observance of the Torah*), required of the Gentiles as a *conditio sine qua non* for salvation after Christ.[23]

Returning into slavery means returning to the time that was overcome in Christ. Paul stresses the contrast between "formerly" (4:8) and "now" (4:8). Since the Galatians are children of God through Christ (3:26–29), having received the Spirit (4:6), they are also mature children (4:5) who are not to "go

20 More on the OT background of ζυγός and its use in LXX, including its positive meaning, in TDNT II, 896–898.

21 In the letter, it appears in a total of nine times (Gal 1:9.17; 2:1.18; 4:9(2×).19; 5:1.3.

22 Dunn, *Galatians*, 262, sees a connection between Gal 4:9 and 5:1.

23 In this perspective πάλιν does not necessarily mean that the Galatians had been under "the yoke of Torah" before; so Betz, *Galatians*, 258.

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back" before Christ. As explained by Paul earlier in the letter, Christ was sent to end the period of immaturity when the Law was a "disciplinarian" (παιδαγωγός, 3:24–25) because the Law did/does not have the power to justify one before God, and so to give life. However, there is some pressure to turn the road back to slavery. By the statement in Gal 5:1 Paul addresses to his readers a radical 'either–or'. Already in Gal 4:21–31 he introduced the image of two testaments: two mothers – a free one and an enslaved one – referring to the alternative of either remaining in freedom or being enslaved again. To go back 'before Christ' means, Paul maintains, to fall away from grace: "You who want to be justified by the law have cut yourselves off from Christ; you have fallen away from grace." (Gal 5:4).

According to Paul, the future of the Galatian Christians is at stake. Therefore, he seeks to find the right words, tone of voice, and theological arguments throughout the whole letter. "You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly exhibited as crucified!" (Gal 3:1). This sharp statement throws light also on the argument in Galatians 5:1. To follow the gospel of the opponents (Gal 1:6–9) and to accept the commandments of the Torah means to submit oneself to the yoke of slavery again. By reminding the readers that they were already set free by Christ, he wishes to make clear that to return to slavery would be a foolish decision. It is as if some ex-slave (freedman), who has been manumissed, were to return to another slave master! Thereby Paul urges his churches in Galatia to stand firm in the present freedom they have in Christ.

2.5 *The Background of the Liberation Motif in Gal 5:1: History of Interpretation*

The attempts to understand more precisely the liberation motif in Galatians 5:1 were many and the clues were sought in various corners of the cultural milieu of Paul. The 'new exodus' reading of Galatians 5:1 introduced by Davies represents one among several scholarly assumptions.

For many decades, the Hellenistic background had been decisive. Influential in the beginning was the finding of Adolf Deissmann (1923),[24] who introduced a parallel between Greek inscriptions discovered in Delphi and Paul's statement. According to the contemporary practice of sacral manumission, a slave could have been sold to a deity for the sake of his or her liberation. Such a slave thus became the property of the deity, but not a temple slave, thereby acquiring freedom. This interpretation prevailed in older commentaries.[25]

24 Deissmann, *Licht*, 274ff. (1st edition 1908).

25 However, it was newly restored e.g. by Witherington III, *Grace*, 340.

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In 1948/49, in a short meditation on Gal 5:13–15, Günther Bornkamm argued against Deissmann's hypothesis.[26] He maintained that in the background of the verse was the ancient legal practice *redemptio ad hostibus*, i.e. redemption of prisoners of war who were enslaved after having been captured. Through the redemption, they regained their freedom and civil rights.[27]

In his study from 1951, K.H. Rengstorf[28] while agreeing with Deissmann that Paul used legal categories, made a case for Jewish law being decisive for the interpretation of the verse, as it distinguishes two options for the sale or redemption of a Jewish slave. The slave could be redeemed either to be set free or to enter a new form of slavery. His evidence for this practice is found in Mishnah Gittin IV:4 (b.Gittin 37 b) and corresponds to Gal 5:1 not only linguistically but also factually. This interpretation was acclaimed by some interpreters.[29]

Another proposal, challenging the two earlier hypotheses, was made by Franz Mussner in his commentary on Galatians (1977/1988).[30] According to him, it is not convincing that there could possibly be either Hellenistic or Jewish backgrounds for Gal 5:1. The parallel from the Mishnah is not akin in terms of content, as Gal 5:1 does not deal with 'redemption' or 'payout'. Alternatives are suggested: (a) a payout that leads to new slavery, or (b) a payout in the name of freedom that can be restricted by the Law. According to Mussner, the verse Gal 5:1 is a formulation, which Paul constructed *ad hoc*, especially considering the background of verse 4:31. It concerns an argumentative basis for the imperatives in 5:1b and the following verses in 5:2–10.

A critical position to the two hypotheses was also adopted by Stanley F. Jones (1987).[31] Having analysed both the Rabbinic background and the arguments of Rengstorf, he gives several reasons why the two options are not convincing. First, Jones challenges the possibility that redemption of slaves would be restricted to Jewish law, since this practice was known in Hellenistic and Roman law as well. Moreover, Jones maintains that Paul has in mind a different kind of redemption leading to freedom, in Gal 5:1. He joins Mussner in the opinion that the verse does not allow the double alternative of redemption to freedom and redemption to slavery. Therefore, Jones seeks to explain the dative case as

26 Bornkamm, "Freiheit".
27 Bornkamm, "Freiheit," 133.
28 Rengstorf, "Zu Gal. 5,1".
29 E.g. Oepke, *Galater*, 118.
30 Mussner, *Galaterbrief*, 345.
31 Jones, "Freiheit," 97–102.

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dativus relationis, suggesting a quote from Epictetus (4,1,113–114) as the closest parallel to Gal 5:1.[32]

We have seen so far that the attempts to identify the background of Paul's statement in the Hellenistic and Jewish legal practices did not remain unchallenged[33] and that there are reasons for perceiving the statement as an *ad hoc* formulation, resulting from the preceding exposition in Galatians 4:21–31 and, at the same time, serving as the basis for further interpretation or pursuit of affinities in lexical and grammatical respects.

The interest in intertextuality in the Letter to the Galatians has led to another suggestion of possible ideological background for the phrase in Gal 5:1. In her study on the exodus tradition in Paul's letters (1999), Sylvia C. Keesmaat dealt also with the Letter to the Galatians. She is quite reserved about the significance of the exodus motif in the letter:

> I do not wish to argue that these exodus themes are as central to Paul's concern in this letter as is his contrast between this age and the new creation, or his emphasis on the cross of Christ.[34]

Nevertheless, she concludes that "exodus motifs and the exodus story undergird much of the letter to the Galatians,"[35] referring to the Jewish hope of a new exodus and the significance of the sonship–slavery antithesis.[36]

Drawing on earlier studies focused on the connection between the Old Testament motifs of exodus and the concept of liberation in Galatians,[37] T.A. Wilson seeks to show in his study of 2004 that the epistle has a similar narrative flow to the exodus story.[38] Paul assesses the crisis that emerged as a threatening apostasy that corresponds to the situation in the desert, after Israel was delivered from slavery in Egypt. In this sense, the statement on liberation in Gal 5:1 can be read against the background of the exodus tradition.

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32 Epictetus, *Diss*. 4,1,113–114: ταύτην ἠλευθερώθη Διογένης παρ' Ἀντισθένους καὶ οὐκέτι ἔφη καταδουλωθῆναι δύνασθαι ὑπ' οὐδενός. Jones, "Freiheit," 98–99.

33 The conclusions of Mussner and Jones are in line with the argument of Vollenweider, *Freiheit*, 289: "Die Wendung dürfte nicht auf konkrete hellenistische oder jüdische Rechtsbräuche zurückgehen."

34 Keesmaat, *Paul*, 187–188.

35 Keesmaat, *Paul*, 189.

36 Keesmaat, *Paul*, 169. On the overview of the relationship between slavery and sonship in Galatians, cf. 167–169.

37 Especially Keesmaat, *Paul*, 551, note 8, who introduces the reinterpretation of the exodus tradition in Romans and Galatians; or Söding, "Freiheit."

38 Wilson, "Wilderness".

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> As an extension of the notion of 'freedom' developed in 4:1–7 and continued in 4:21–31, his choice of terms likely echoes the liberation of the Exodus, where being 'set free' from slavery was the hallmark of the Israelites' experience.[39]

In Judaism, the link between freedom/liberation and exodus is attested both lexically and liturgically. The Pesach Haggadah links the celebration of the *passover* with passing *from slavery to freedom.* Wilson does not camouflage the weakness of his argument, namely, that the Septuagint nowhere uses the *eleutheria*-statements in relation to the deliverance from Egypt. The link between the exodus and freedom would be Paul's (5:1a), whereas slavery and Egypt (5:1b) were already linked quite well. "The Galatians are in danger of apostatizing in the 'wilderness' by 'turning away' from the one who called them and turning back to 'a yoke of slavery'."[40]

We can close our brief overview with the monograph of G. Uzukwu (2015), who first evaluates different possible background sources behind the notion of freedom in Galatians.[41] After a short critical survey of both Greek-Roman parallels and the Exodus motif, she presents her own position, suggesting that Paul's statements in Galatians are preconditioned by the influence of his culture but not defined by it. With regard to Gal 5:1, Uzukwu misses there a more explicit allusion to the Exodus event. According to her: "Paul's understanding of freedom is evocative of his social and historical environment, but his application of the concept in the context of Galatians is unique to the text."[42]

2.6 *Evaluation: Interactions of the Interpretations*

However interesting the long-time effort to determine the background of Galatians 5:1 is, it may be actually leading up a blind alley of scholarly speculation. There are valid reasons to accept the opinion that the formulation is an *ad hoc* one, as Mussner argues, or unique to the text, as Uzukwu suggests. However, in the first place, the main emphasis of intertextuality should be taken into account: no text emerges in a vacuum. Paul, as a Jew, was shaped by the OT traditions from his childhood – on textual, symbolic, and liturgical basis.[43] Secondly, besides conscious quotations or allusions there are also incognizant references, or rather echoes.[44] And thirdly, the OT should not be

39 Wilson, "Wilderness," 564.
40 Wilson, "Wilderness," 565.
41 Uzukwu, *Unity*, 157–163.
42 Uzukwu, *Unity*, 162.
43 More on this perspective e.g. Sanders, "Jewishness".
44 Cf. Moyise, "Intertextuality," 18–19.

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considered as a tradition among traditions, but rather as a normative paradigm for Paul's theological interpretation. In the light of these assumptions and existing alternative interpretations, we present our position.

First, we agree with Mussner and Jones in their questioning the positions of Deissman and Rengstorf. Especially in terms of content, those positions do not correspond to the text in Gal 5:1 and to the flow of Paul's argumentation. The case of redemption paid by the slave, i.e. self-redemption, does not fit Paul's text either. Paul warns against losing the freedom that has been gained. In contrast to Jones, however, we do not take the difference between the Greek terms regarding redemption and freedom as decisive. When one starts with a Hebrew text and asks about possible renderings into Greek, there are several options in the lexical field of liberation/redemption. Paul uses the motif of redemption in Gal 3:13 and 4:5 (ἐξαγοράζω). The weaknesses of Jones' position are his excessive emphasis on the *eleutheria*-statements instead of considering the whole semantic field, and his one-sided focus on the Greek background of the concept freedom.[45]

Second, the exodus tradition suggested by Keesmmat and Wilson seems to be best fitting in terms of content within the spectrum of the proposed options. The statement in Gal 5:1a introduces the motif of God's liberation of Israel, while 5:1b echoes the motif of apostasy in the desert as well as the more recent exile tradition. With respect to the formulation, the closest parallel may be the text from Epictetus, as proposed by Jones.[46] But when we ask about the background of Paul's thought, solid ground is provided by the notion of liberation as it was known from the OT and articulated in liturgy. When asking about what Paul possibly could have in mind, we must also consider his original addressees and the possibilities of their knowledge that would have enabled them to understand Paul's hints. It is most likely that if Paul expected his readers to have some knowledge of the tradition of Abraham, to whose story he repeatedly referred, they could well have been familiar with at least the basic outline of the exodus tradition. The narrative about God's deliverance from Egypt played a key role in the self-understanding of Israel. God's liberating action with Israel in the exodus provides a good analogy to the universal and eschatological deliverance in Christ – including the Gentiles (Gal 1:3–4; 4,1–7; 5,1).

Third, the option for the exodus tradition as the background of Gal 5:1 is further supported by the fact that in both instances the motif is *primarily theological*, and not legal (contra Deissmann and Rengstorf): God the Lord is

45 Differently e.g. Söding, "Freiheit," 119–122, 127–128.

46 See n. 32 above.

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the originator of liberation. Furthermore, Mussner's reading of Gal 5:1 as the foundation for other imperatives and interpretation of Gal 5:2–12, and possibly also 5:13–14, corresponds well to the exodus tradition, where the indicative of liberation is connected to the imperative of observing the covenant faithfully (cf. also the introduction to the Decalogue in Exod 20:1f and Deut 5:6f). It is worth noticing that the context of the exodus tradition brings back also the *legal motif*, despite its having been dismissed by the recent scholarship. The liberation in Exodus is followed by the covenant, formulated as a legal document between God (the liberator) and Israel (the liberated). LXX does not use the notion of *eleutheria* for describing this liberation, but rather the notion of redemption and new ownership. Additionally, the motif of sonship that is so crucial in the Letter to the Galatians – in chapters 3 and 4 it seems to be the leitmotif and a synonym for freedom/liberation – first appears in Exod 4:22.

Finally, in this context, the contested dative case τῇ ἐλευθερίᾳ can also be understood as the dative of direction (*dativus finalis*) that suggests the direction of the liberation: God delivers from slavery to freedom.

In sum, the motif of exodus, Christologically reinterpreted anew for the situation in Galatia, appears as the most convincing alternative among the options proposed so far. The initiative is with God and the freedom is a redeemed freedom (a soteriological metaphor), and not merely a political or anthropological term, freedom achieved through human efforts. Analogically to the liberated Israelites, the Christians in Galatia are not regarded as free by nature (κατὰ φύσιν) or free-born citizens of the *polis*, but as ex-slaves who were set free (Gal 4:1–7; 5,1) and are in urgent danger of falling back into slavery by turning to a different gospel shortly after their liberation (ταχέως in Gal 1:6) and submitting again to a yoke of slavery. Just as the deliverance from Egypt was supposed to enable the service to the Lord, the freedom in Christ is supposed to be expressed in the service of the neighbour in love (Gal 5:13). That is supported here through a reference to the Torah (Lev 19:18).

3 Liberation from Slavery: Exodus Imagery within an Intertextual Matrix

In this part, we want to illustrate how the exodus imagery functioned within intertextual matrix.[47] We will follow that on the passages Exod 6:6–8; Lev 26:13;

47 The label adopted from Hays, *Echoes*, 155.

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Jer 30:8–9 and Ezek 34:27.[48] In our study this part represents a bridge: it provides verification of the above-mentioned interpretation, while also preparing the material for evaluating *the volume* of intertextual reference as one specific criterion used in the following chapter.[49]

Focusing on intertextuality in Galatians, we can observe the variety of ways Paul used OT texts and referred to them. Apart from ten obvious quotations, there are several more disputed allusions or echoes.[50] Regarding the intertextuality of Gal 5:1, we can see two starting points for our analysis. There is agreement among scholars that the verse does not contain direct quotation or allusion. Yet in the current research there is also growing the conviction that one cannot fully evaluate the intertextual links in the Pauline letters just on the basis of undisputed quotations and allusions.[51] The close literary context of the verse (notably Gal 4:21–31) seems to support this sensitivity. Contrary to the already mentioned opinion of Uzukwu, who suggests that "if Paul wanted to make allusion to the Exodus event, he would have used the appropriate expression",[52] I would like to point out that the spectrum of intertextual phenomena is more complex and that Paul was a creative interpreter of the OT. The scholars who advocate the exodus motif behind Gal 5:1 do not regard the verse as an allusion, but rather as an echo or thematic parallel.

Uzukwu maintains that the allusion to *the Exodus event is not present here.* However, a link between Paul's formulation in Gal 5:1 and the exodus or 'new exodus' motif may be finer and one has to consider more aspects. There are over 120 references to the exodus event throughout OT, involving texts of different genres: law, narrative, prophecy, and psalms.[53] Indeed, we can speak about 'exodus-motif' or 'exodus imagery', which covers more than just the account of the exodus event:

a) the exodus event itself – the narrative of the deliverance from Egypt,
b) commemoration of exodus in the liturgy of Passover,
c) the hope for a 'new exodus' arising in the exile and in the prophetic traditions of the period, including the texts before/outside Deutero-Isaiah, sometimes envisioning the return from the exile as a second exodus,
d) Jewish-Christian (re)interpretation of the exodus tradition,
e) direct Christological reinterpretation of the 'new exodus' in Paul's 1 Cor 10.

48 For the occurrences of the exodus motif in the OT see e.g. Fishbane, "Motif"; Watts, "Exodus".

49 Cf. Hays, *Echoes*, 30.

50 Silva, "Old Testament," 631.

51 On the variety of usage and diverse frequency in the Pauline epistles see Koch, *Schrift*.

52 Uzukwu, *Unity*.

53 Cf. Watts, "Exodus," 478.

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We cannot know, whether Paul was the first Christian thinker to introduce the notion of freedom into Christian theology, or the first to reinterpret the divine deliverance in Christ as the 'new exodus' (1 Cor 5 and 10). It is quite possible to imagine the existence of some pre-Pauline tradition(s) in the Christian-Jewish community, e.g. in Jerusalem, which could connect the Easter Christ-event (crucifixion and resurrection) with the memory of exodus celebrated on Passover.[54]

3.1 *Exod 6:6–8* (*NRSV*)

> Say therefore to the Israelites, 'I am the LORD,
> and I will free (ἐξάξω ὑμᾶς) you from the burdens of the Egyptians
> and deliver you from slavery to them (ῥύσομαι ὑμᾶς ἐκ τῆς δουλείας).
> I will redeem you (λυτρώσομαι) with an outstretched arm
> and with mighty acts of judgment.
> I will take you as my people, and I will be your God.
> You shall know that I am the LORD your God,
> who has freed you (ἐξαγαγὼν) from the burdens of the Egyptians.
> I will bring you into the land
> that I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob;
> I will give it to you for a possession. I am the LORD.'

The passage contains a series of verbs describing God's intervention for the sake of Israel. Brueggemann writes about the "verbs of exodus", the common denominator of which is God, who delivers his people.[55] Since Egypt is described as "the house of slavery" (Exod 20:2: ἐξήγαγόν σε ἐκ γῆς Αἰγύπτου ἐξ οἴκου δουλείας), the statements *I will bring you out* or *lead you from Egypt* implicate liberation, therefore some English translations (e.g. NRSV) read: *I will free* (Exod 6:6), *has freed you* (Exod 6:7). Egypt became a symbol of, and a synonym for, tyranny and slavery in Jewish tradition. With regard to Galatians, the same Greek verb ἐξαιρέω was used by Paul in his opening soteriological statement in Galatians 1:4 and also occurs in Exod 3:8 (LXX; cf. Exod 18:4): *to deliver someone from peril or confining circumstance, set free or rescue* (cf. BDAG 2). From the lexical point of view, the closest link to Gal 5:1 – besides the general thematic or soteriological parallel – can be found in Exod 6:6 and the statement ῥύσομαι ὑμᾶς ἐκ τῆς δουλείας.

54 On this question see Smith, "Uses," 213.

55 Brueggemann, *Theology*, 176.

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3.2 *Lev 26:13* (*NRSV*)

> I am the LORD your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt,
> to be their slaves (δούλων) no more;
> I have broken the bars of your yoke (τὸν δεσμὸν τοῦ ζυγοῦ ὑμῶν)
> and made you walk erect (μετὰ παρρησίας).

The liberation motif is expressed both by the verb "brought you out" (ὁ ἐξαγαγὼν ὑμᾶς) and the notions belonging to the semantic field of freedom: slavery (δούλων) and yoke (συνέτριψα τὸν δεσμὸν τοῦ ζυγοῦ ὑμῶν). Both these occur in Gal 5:1.[56] In addition to this there is the Greek notion παρρησία (LXX) – 'freedom of action' (Sir 25:25) or 'boldness' (Wis 5:1). *Parrésia* characterised free people and stands in contrast to the oppressed and hunched slaves. God gave his people dignity, so that they might walk erect, upright.[57] 'Breaking the yoke' appears in several OT texts in the context of liberation and salvation: cf. Isa 9:4: "For the yoke of their burden (ὁ ζυγὸς), and the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian."

3.3 *Jer 30:8–9* (*NRSV*)

> On that day, says the LORD of hosts,
> I will break the yoke (τὸν ζυγὸν) from off his neck,
> and I will burst his bonds,
> and strangers shall no more make a servant of him (ἐργῶνται αὐτοὶ).
> But they shall serve the LORD their God (ἐργῶνται τῷ κυρίῳ θεῷ αὐτῶν)
> and David their king, whom I will raise up for them.

Here again emerges God's promise of liberation by breaking the yoke in LXX Jer 37:8–9: *I will break the yoke* (συντρίψω τὸν ζυγὸν), which parallels the statement in Gal 5:1. The subjection and enslavement is described here without the use of the δοῦλος word group. The deliverance enables one to serve God (τῷ κυρίῳ θεῷ αὐτῶν) instead of addressing the serving of strangers.

3.4 *Ezek 34:27* (*NRSV*)

> The trees of the field shall yield their fruit,
> and the earth shall yield its increase.

56 This intertextual linkage is pointed out by e.g. Keesmaat, *Paul*, 171, or Söding, "Freiheit".
57 Hartley, *Leviticus*, 463.

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> They shall be secure on their soil;
> and they shall know that I am the LORD,
> when I break the bars of their yoke (ζυγὸν αὐτῶν),
> and save (ἐξελοῦμαι) them
> from the hands of those who enslaved them (καταδουλωσαμένων αὐτούς).

The promise of God's liberating intervention is expressed by the symbol of breaking the yoke of slavery: *I break the bars of their yoke*; the same Greek verb occurs in Exod 6:8: *deliver, set free* (ἐξαιρέω, cf. Gal 1:4). The verb *to enslave* (καταδουλόω) is also found in Exodus 6:5 (cf. 3 Macc 2:6). The contrasting pair 'enslavement–freedom' meets in Gal 2:4: "But because of false believers secretly brought in, who slipped in to spy on the freedom (τὴν ἐλευθερίαν) we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might enslave us (ἵνα ἡμᾶς καταδουλώσουσιν)." The reference to Gal 5:1 is evoked by the terms *yoke*, *slavery*, and the *soteriological statement* from the semantic field of freedom.

We could extend the textual basis of exodus imagery, including hope for a 'new exodus', by the prophecy of Isaiah: "to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners" (Isa 61:1). The role of Isaiah for Pauline theology is well documented by recent research.[58] The survey demonstrates, however, that for the motif of the 'new exodus' Paul (like any of his Jewish contemporaries) was not necessarily dependent on Isaiah. Smith rightly claims: "We should not consider Isaiah to be the lens through which Second Temple Jews viewed the exodus."[59] In the case of Gal 5:1, scholars who investigated in detail the impact of this prophetic book on the Letter to the Galatians do not refer to particular verses but rather to passages and themes.

It is important for our study that Paul, as a 'Second Temple Jew', was familiar with and shaped by both the exodus story and 'exodus imagery'. In looking for an echo, the first testing question is whether "the source of the echo was available to the author and/or original reader".[60] In our case, the crucial findings would be that (a) the OT God (Yahweh) was clearly identified as the liberating God who delivered the sons of Israel from Egypt and (b) this foundational action of God was commemorated (made present) in the annual Passover liturgy. That was also the reason why (c) God's redemptive intervention was both retold and anticipated by the prophets as a 'new exodus'. According to Fishbane: "A concord between the first and succeeding redemptions is the issue, for each generation looked to the first exodus as the archetypal expression of its own

58 Wilk, *Bedeutung*; more recently Wilk, "Paul".
59 Smith, "Uses," 236.
60 So Hays, *Echoes*, 29.

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future hope."[61] Hence, the OT 'exodus imagery', with its variety of metaphors, including the memory of exodus, can be seen as a *precondition* and *basis* for the Pauline (or any Jewish-Christian) interpretation of salvation in Christ as God's expected liberation – as the 'new exodus', or with Wilson, "an Exodus-like experience in Christ".[62]

Instead of *eleutheria*-statements, which are missing from the selected passages, we observed several terms of the semantic field of freedom, as well as verbatim linkages between Gal 5:1 and OT texts. We were not able to detect one main verse or particular passage either in the Torah or in the prophets which could be pointed out as 'the OT reference' in this complex. These findings are important for the more detailed evaluation of the verse within the intertextual spectrum.

4 Intertextual Perspective

Richard B. Hays is correct in asserting that "the identification of allusion and especially of echoes is not a strictly scientific matter lending itself to conclusive proof, like testing for the presence or absence of a chemical in the bloodstream."[63] This is one of the reasons why the sets of data and statistics based on the research and analysis of intertextual relationships of the same passage can differ.[64] With regard to this we can mention some basic factors which influence both the exploration and results of such research:

a) the attitude of the scholar and his/her preconceived understanding – either the inclination to consider and seek the intertextual links between OT and NT texts or rather a distrust toward intertextual examination,[65]
b) definition of the terminology of 'quotation', 'allusion', 'echo' or 'thematic parallel', and of the spectrum – i.e. whether the scale should be three- or four-fold,[66]
c) evaluation of a particular passage or verse and determination of its position within a defined spectrum, including its designation as an echo or a thematic parallel,
d) the attitude of the scholar and his/her tendency to use either bold or careful statements concerning the advocated setting within the spectrum.

61 Fishbane, "Exodus," 121.
62 Wilson, "Wilderness," 570.
63 Hays, *Conversion*, 30.
64 See some works and their results in Beale, *Handbook*, 31–32.
65 In the case of Gal 5:1 such distrust would lead to preferring the background and parallels of the notion of freedom in the Hellenistic tradition (e.g. the Stoics) to the OT-Jewish one.
66 Cf. more complex categories in Wilk, "Bezüge," 170–173.

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4.1 *Intertextual Spectrum*

As we have already noted, the range of possible ways of intertextual referring is wider than just quotations and allusions. In newer investigations of biblical intertextual relationships, the spectrum has been expanded by the notion of *echo* into a three-fold form. The significant impetus to that was given by the study of Richard Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (1989).[67] According to Hays, "*allusion* is used of obvious intertextual references, *echo* of subtler ones".[68] Hays offers several criteria to identify and interpret an echo.[69] Unlike quotation or allusion, which are by definition intended, the scholars assume that echo can be also unconscious. Moyise claims: "echo, faint traces of texts that are probably quite unconscious but emerge from minds soaked in the scriptural heritage of Israel".[70]

The three-fold scale *quotation–allusion–echo* can be considered as most typical in contemporary NT studies; however, more recently the scale has been still extended by the term *thematic parallel*:

> Thus with thematic parallels we are dealing with ideas/concepts shared between texts that transcend precise verbal relationships. In such cases it is often difficult to determine whether the shared thematic parallels originate from a specific text or are instead part of the larger shared scriptural background that shaped the very conceptual framework of Paul.[71]

4.2 *Echoes and Thematic Parallels in Gal 5:1*

For our purpose it is interesting to compare the interpretation of Gal 5:1 in the monographs of Sylvia Keesmaat and Matthew Harmon in at least two aspects. On one hand, they present the results of different approaches to intertextuality in Galatians. At the same time, they can be helpful in discerning the echoes in the text. One of the criteria for identifying an echo is namely the question, whether other readers or interpreters concur on hearing one.[72]

Keesmaat focuses on the letters to the Romans and Galatians and on retelling the exodus tradition in them. She works with the three basic categories of references and in identifying echoes she follows the criteria of Hays.[73] With

67 Hays, *Echoes*.
68 Hays, *Echoes*, 29.
69 He suggests seven tests, cf. Hays, *Echoes*, 29–32.
70 Moyise, "Intertextuality," 18–19.
71 Harmon, *Must*, 30.
72 Hays, *Echoes*, 31.
73 Keesmaat, *Paul*, 52.

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regard to Gal 5:1 she writes: "this verse has a number of echoes with the exodus tradition, especially those parts of the narrative where Israel expressed a desire to return to Egypt."[74] The monograph of Harmon deals with the influence of Isaiah in Galatians and works with four categories of intertextuality: *citation*, *allusion*, *echo*, and *thematic parallel*.[75] Although the passage Galatians 5:1 is missing in his final chart,[76] Harmon includes this verse among the thematic parallels. He concludes:

> Therefore although we do not find any allusions to or echoes of Isaiah regarding the specific terminology of freedom, there are thematic parallels that are at least consistent with Paul's previous use of Isaianic second exodus imagery earlier in Gal 4:1–7, culminating in the trope of 4:21–5:1 that concludes with an assertion of the believer's freedom in 5:1 and a call in 5:13 for the Galatians to become servants to one another.[77]

Concerning the emphasis on freedom in the passage Gal 5:1–13, Harmon observes a parallel to that major theme in Isa 40–55.[78] To sum up, both authors agree on the relationship between Gal 5:1 and OT tradition and on the use of the term 'new exodus'. They differ in terminological assessment of intertextual relationships and in the scope of the material they examine. According to Keesmaat, the verse represents an *echo*, while Harmon includes it among *thematic parallels*.

4.3 *Intertextual Position of Gal 5:1*

Our previous explorations supply arguments for positioning Gal 5:1 on Harmon's scale *between an echo and a thematic parallel* (see the figure below).[79] Besides obvious thematic links with the OT, we have observed several explicit lexical overlaps: Greek terms used in LXX (slavery, yoke) and soteriological metaphors from the semantic field of freedom. Our suggestion is based on the combination of all those aspects – thematic (divine intervention in history, soteriology in terms of deliverance from slavery, endangered by a new enslavement) and verbatim.

74 Keesmaat, *Paul*, 187.
75 Harmon, *Must*, 28, 45.
76 Cf. the chart of proposed Isaianic influences in Harmon, *Must*, 265.
77 Harmon, *Must*, 209.
78 Harmon, *Must*, 252.
79 The figure with slight modification taken from Harmon, *Must*, 28.

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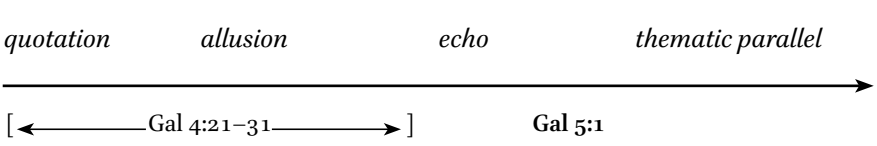

This position is also supported by the literal context of the statement. It is located immediately after an 'extra-intertextual' unit in the epistle (Gal 4:21–31), so the verse stands in the shadow of explicit citations Gal 4:27 (Isa 54:1); 4:30 (Gen 21:10) and Gal 5:14 (Lev 19:18). When we proceed solely from the citations – leaving aside other more or less evident intertextual links – it is obvious that in chapters 3 and 5 Paul's mind was concentrated on the Torah: out of ten quotations eight refer to the Torah. Hence, it seems only natural to seek the disputed background of Gal 5:1 in the OT tradition rather than elsewhere. Moreover, as James Dunn noticed, the story of Israel is referred to at a number of points throughout Galatians, from the first chapter to the last one.[80]

In the passage Gal 4:21–31, the apostle employs OT material for his theology and argumentation with much interpretative creativity.[81] Within ten verses of his bold allegorical-typological interpretation, the variety of intertextual references includes quotations, allusions, and paraphrase. We have already showed that intertextuality in Paul's letters goes beyond quotations or allusions. Therefore, if we consider Gal 5:1 as an echo/thematic parallel evoking the OT exodus motif, it does not suppose a reference to one specific verse, but it reckons with creativity and originality in his understanding of freedom.[82] In Gal 4:21–31, the motif of *free mother and free son/s* is ruminatively integrated and woven into his interpretation. At the same time, it is clearly missing in other Greek and Hebrew texts. It seems justified, therefore, to expect similarly creative reinterpretation in Gal 5:1, imagining the liberation in Christ as a 'new exodus'. This expectation might also rely on considering Paul's explicit interpretation of the Christ-event by linking it to the exodus motifs in 1 Cor 5 and 10.

5 Usefulness of the Ambiguous Term 'New Exodus'

From the first half of the 20th century, when the nexus *Paul and a new exodus* was introduced by Davies as something novel, the situation has changed

80 Dunn, *Theology of Galatians*, 36–41.

81 On Paul's verbatim quotations and modifications including loose interpretations of OT texts see Koch, *Schrift*, 11–198.

82 See the arguments against OT tradition in Uzukwu, *Unity*, 162.

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noticeably. Today, the New Testament scholarship is flooded by innumerable studies containing 'new exodus' in their titles, the phrase emerges quite ordinarily.[83] In his helpful survey, Daniel Smith aptly refers to the current situation as a 'wilderness'.[84] It seems advisable to give some critical consideration to the usefulness of the connection *liberation in Christ as a new exodus* for understanding Paul's Christological emphasis.[85]

In the first place, we need to emphasise with Smith that the term 'new exodus' is a modern creation without any textual evidence either in OT-Jewish or Christian (Pauline) literature. From this silence, however, it should not be inferred that the concept of a 'new exodus' would have been alien to the Jewish minds of the Second Temple period. As Smith puts it: "While the term's coinage might be modern, the concept itself harbours no anachronism."[86]

Considering that, to see Paul's statement of Gal 5:1 about liberation in Christ through the perspective of a 'new exodus' may be regarded as a useful interpretative tool in the following aspects:

a) it helps to express the continuity that is apparently important for Paul: the God, who liberated Israel from Egypt, is God the Father, who sent his Son Jesus Christ for the sake of salvation (Gal 1:3–5); it was the will of this God that brought about the *liberation to freedom* (Gal 5:1),
b) the analogy with the exodus helps to show that the liberation in Christ includes a new dominion and a new type of service and relationship: Christians are both *servants of Christ* and *adopted sons in Christ* (Gal 3:26–29; 4:1–7); the life under the new Lordship involves responsibility toward Christ and to ones neighbours (Gal 5:13) – a new and imperative ethos,
c) it helps to point out the fact that liberation through Christ is a singular event (grammatically the aorist in Gal 5:1a), but also a way (imperative), i.e. the present and subjective aspect of life and *pilgrimage in the freedom* that is in peril of a new slavery – therefore the need for the appeal to *stand firm in freedom* (Gal 5:1b),
d) it helps to make clear that the freedom concerns the whole community (the people of God, the church) – Paul formulates his *eleutheria*-statements in the plural (Gal 2:4; 5:13 etc.), like a number of other statements (Gal 1:4).

83 Cf. Schreiner, *Theology*, 338.

84 Smith, "Uses". On the state of research, he writes the following (pp. 207–208): "The popularity of this term renders an exhaustive treatment of contemporary use of 'new exodus' impossible, and even a thorough survey of contemporary scholarly usage is impractical, given the torrent of publications". On the Pauline literature cf. pp. 216–220.

85 Smith notes several meanings of the phrase among scholars. "Uses," 208–216.

86 Smith, "Uses," 236.

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The phrase 'new exodus' can also be considered a useful 'label' for basic orientation in the broader context of Pauline research and in exploring the background of Paul's thinking about freedom, notably its parallels in the Graeco-Roman and Stoic traditions. It clearly points out the role of the OT-Jewish heritage. It may also correspond to Paul's understanding his calling to proclaim the Gospel in terms of a prophetic vocation (Gal 1:15–16 / Isa 49:1; Jer 1:5) to herald the liberating good news.[87]

The discussion about the origins of Paul's concept of freedom reflects not only the disputed background or origin of his 'theology of freedom', but also the OT as the main hermeneutic framework of his theology and the Christ-event as a climatic act in Israel's wider story.[88] The connection between freedom in Christ and a 'new exodus' may usefully serve as an 'umbrella notion' for several soteriological statements or metaphors belonging to the semantic field of 'liberation/freedom' (e.g. 'to rescue', 'deliver' in Exod 6:8 and Gal 1:4) or 'sonship/adoption', which are, in Galatians, almost synonymous with 'freedom/free' in contrast to the status of slave/slavery (Gal 3–4).

6 Conclusion

The suggestion of W.D. Davies that Paul used the concept of a 'new exodus' in his interpretation of the significance of Jesus Christ found support and confirmation in the recent decades of scholarship, which supplemented the general claim of Davies with detailed analyses. It has been shown that the motif of 'new exodus' played a crucial role in the formation of Paul's theology of freedom, developed especially in his Letter to the Galatians. The present study was focused on Paul's statement in Gal 5:1, which was allocated already by Davies without any detailed examination to the group of pronouncements presenting the redemption in Christ as a 'new exodus'. We can confirm Davies' position.

In comparison with 1 Corinthians, where the interconnection between Christ, Christians, and the story of exodus is clearly formulated (1 Cor 5:1–5: Christ as the Passover lamb, 1 Cor 10:1–10: baptism as passing through the sea, Christ as the rock), in the Epistle to the Galatians the motif of exodus is less conspicuous if considered on the intertextual level.[89] Direct quotations

87 Hays, *Echoes*, 14: "He saw himself as a prophetic figure, carrying forward the proclamation of God's word as Israel's prophets and sages had always done, in a way that reactivated past revelation under new conditions."

88 This is the emphasis of Matera, *Christology*, 83–85 and 102–133.

89 So e.g. Keesmaat, *Paul*, 189.

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are lacking and only a few allusions to the Book of Exodus occur.[90] However, the exodus motif is not limited to the Book of Exodus and the phenomenon of intertextuality does not rely solely on the quotations or allusions. We have classified the statement in Gal 5:1 as an echo or a thematic parallel of the motif, evoking so the thought of a 'new exodus'. Such a form of reference does not point to one specific text, but it assumes an intertextual matrix which functions on theological (*soteriological*), symbolic (*metaphorical linkage*), and lexical levels (*semantic field of freedom in LXX: redemption/liberation, yoke, slavery*), as well as on the level of narration (*threat of the loss of freedom and a return to slavery*).

By presenting the redemption in Christ as a 'new exodus', Paul, as a Second Temple Jew, reinterpreted the Old Testament confession of God, who reveals Himself in history as the Deliverer. The Apostle Paul shared with the prophet Isaiah the hope for universal salvation that would include Jews and Gentiles.[91] Paul was sent to the Gentiles to proclaim to them the message of liberty for the captives (Isa 61:1; Gal 4,1–7). In this sense he acted as a preacher of 'a new exodus'. In these terms he interpreted the significance of Jesus as the fulfilment of the anticipated eschatological liberation, promised in the Scripture and fulfilled according to the will of God (Gal 1:3–5). The Epistle to the Galatians is a testimony of his struggle, in which he defends intensively and firmly the freedom gained against a new kind of slavery.

90 Cf. Gal 3:17/Exod 12,40; Gal 4:24/Exod 24,7.

91 Hays, *Conversion*, 48.

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Augustine on *Formae Christi*

A Case Study of Inter(con)textuality

Pablo Irizar

1 Introduction

This chapter explores how intertextuality shapes biblical interpretations on a particular case, namely, on the use and function of the pericope Phil 2:6–7 in Augustine's *sermones* on liturgical feasts. It will show that the variations and developments of Augustine's interpretation of Phil 2:6–7 in the *sermones* were shaped within the interplay of the two contexts – liturgical and polemical – in which the sermons were preached. That means that Augustine's treatment of biblical intertextuality in his preaching is context-dependent. Hence, the treatment of Phil 2:6–7 in the *sermones* is inter(con)textual.

1.1 *Intertextuality*

The term 'intertextuality' was first used by Julia Kristeva to replace "the notion of intersubjectivity [because] meaning is not transferred directly from writer to reader but instead is mediated through, or filtered by, codes imparted to the writer and reader by other texts."[1] In other words, intertextuality is a concept that helps locate the process of mediation of meaning from text to reader, in an objective/external system of codes rather than (at least primarily) in a subjective and internal one. Kristeva's notion of intertextuality can, or so she argues, better address hermeneutic issues which the notion of subjectivity leaves unexplained.[2] Since Kristeva first coined the concept of intertextuality, a number of varying uses of the term have emerged with the main intention of fine-tuning Kristeva's initial proposal. The working definition of intertextuality in this chapter (and in the whole book) is broad: the meaning of a given text is to be found at the intersection of factors external to the text in question.

As a hermeneutic concept, intertextuality can be applied to a plethora of texts, including biblical texts. For ease of analysis, the following albeit altered terms in Kristeva's definition seem interchangeable: meaning = interpretation, codes = scriptural passages (i.e. pericopes), and texts = contexts. When

1 Kristeva, *Desire*, 69.

2 It is not necessary to raise these issues here. The point is that intertextuality replaces subjectivity.

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the terms on the left are substituted for the terms on the right, the application of intertextuality to biblical interpretation is easily illustrated: "meaning [= interpretation] is not transferred directly from writer to reader but instead is mediated through, or filtered by, codes [= scriptural passages] imparted to the writer and reader by other texts [= contexts]." The Bible is not a set of hermeneutically sealed codes. For ease of analysis, the somewhat forceful approximation of codes to scriptural passages is necessary. The exercise remains a theoretical one which means fixed variables allow for some latitude when applied to specific texts.

Evidently, intertextuality is relevant to the study of the Scripture at large. Indeed, the Bible is often self-referential: biblical authors often use allusions, references, and/or citations to other scriptural passages. Therefore, an interpreter's use of scriptural passages, which in retrospect have been pragmatically classified into pericopes, offers fertile insights into how authors understand and interpret the Scripture. Such is the case in the history of Patristic exegesis, where meaning is interpretation, scriptural passages are codes, and texts are contexts. For example, the term *orchestration scriptuaire*,[3] used in Augustinian scholarship, is an excellent example of how intertextuality affects Patristic exegesis. It designates the ensemble of recurring pericopes which Augustine employed within a given thematic context throughout various periods and genres in his writing career. The assumption is that how Augustine orchestrates various pericopes accounts in large part for how and why he interprets a given pericope within a specific context. But is this right?

Conflating Kristeva's notion of intertextuality to analyse Augustine's *orchestration scriptuaire* results in the following *hypothesis*: the meaning [= interpretation] of a pericope as presented by Augustine emerges in the interplay between codes [= scriptural passages] and texts [= contexts]. In other words, interpretation is produced by employing a pericope, deliberately or not, within a web of interacting contexts. These interactions shed light on Augustine's reading strategy. We will test this hypothesis in a case study.

1.2 *Intertextuality and Biblical Interpretation: a Case Study*

Augustine's *sermones* exhibit intertextuality on various levels.[4] On the one hand, sermons are delivered and revised within the recurring cycle of a fixed

3 The expression, originally used as a criterion for dating, was coined by La Bonnardière, "Le Cantique," 225–237.

4 For a recent general introduction to the scholarly literature on the *sermones*, see Dupont, *Preacher*, 1–9.

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liturgical calendar.[5] On the other hand, the liturgical calendar consists of a fixed cycle recurring throughout Augustine's extensive preaching career, which was coloured by polemics and controversies. It offers itself as a case study to examine the treatment of a single pericope within this kind of two-fold intertextuality – preaching on recurring liturgical themes in recurring and changing polemical contexts.

As a suitable passage for the study we have chosen verses 6–7 of the hymn Phil 2:6–11, marked by R.P. Martin as *Carmen Christi*.[6] The two selected verses speak about two 'forms' of Christ: about his "being in the form of God" and his "taking the form of a slave" – in Latin *qui cum in forma Dei esset … semet ipsum exinanivit formam servi accipiens …* It is a fundamentally Christological text,[7] it recurs throughout the Augustinian *corpus* (approximately 600 times) in a variety of contexts (polemical, epistolary genre, etc. …) and it is also well represented throughout the liturgical calendar.[8] Our question will be, how Augustine treats Phil 2:6–7 in the *sermones*, and specifically, how the liturgical context and the polemical context interact in those interpretations. Can these contexts account for variations and developments in Augustine's use of Phil 2:6–7 in the *sermones?*

A thematic classification provides the fixed parameters within which we can perform a synchronic and diachronic analysis, in order to detect and account for developments and variations. Hence, we will present the results of our research in the order of the liturgical feasts for which Augustine employs the passage Phil 2:6–7: Christmas, Lent, Easter, Ascension and Pentecost.

2 Christmas

Augustine preached approximately 15 *sermones* on the Feast of Christmas.[9] These sermons are assigned for a single day, the 25th of December and they exhibit a clear thematic unity: the birth of Christ. In all of the Christmas *sermones* Augustine treats the birth of Christ as the *incarnation of God*. At times,

5 For a study of the use of the Scripture and the liturgical calendar in Augustine's *sermones*, see Margoni-Kogler, *Periscope*.

6 Martin, *Carmen*. The book provides a thorough treatment of contemporary biblical scholarship on Phil 2:6–7; see also Martin and Dodd, *Where*.

7 The text often raises the question of Christ's pre-existence. On the problem of pre-existence and v. 6 of Phil. 2, see Martin, *Carmen*, 99–133.

8 For an exhaustive study of Phil 2:6–7 in Augustine, see Verwilghen, *Christologie*.

9 See Dupont, *Preacher*, 9–22.

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he stresses the function of the incarnation, such as redemption[10] or moral example of humility.[11] These are not unrelated, of course, as the humility of Christ is a precondition for achieving his redemptive work and Christ is humble because he is God made man. Within the Christmas *sermones* in general, Phil 2:6–7 is employed, as it recounts the way of God becoming man, and so it provides the framework for presenting the redemptive and pedagogical function of the incarnation.

The pericope is only employed in four Christmas *sermones*.[12] Its exegesis serves essentially to undergird a pro-Nicaene Christology[13] of the incarnation, implying that Christ is human and divine. The divinity of Christ is supported by the statement about *forma dei* in Phil 2:6, in combination with John 1:1; 10:30 and 14:28; Isa 53:8; Ps 15:5–6; Wis 7:27. Specifically, the divinity of Christ not only precedes his incarnation, but it is not affected by it. The statement about *forma serui* in Phil 2:7 (combined with Gal 4:4; Rom 1:1–3; 2 Cor 8:9; Matt 1:23; Mark 12:37 and Ps 19:6) shows that Christ is also human (body and soul),[14] but his 'emptying' in the incarnation refers not to his losing divinity, but to taking up humanity.[15] Interpreted (mainly typologically) within a complex scriptural framework, Phil 2:6–7 provides vocabulary for speaking about the Christological aspect of the incarnation. In it, prior to the birth itself, the *forma serui* was joined to the *forma serui*.

Augustine also makes more specific use of Phil 2:6–7. It concerns the relation of the *formae* and the incarnation. Although the language of the passage does anticipate the Christological formulas that later crystallised at the Council of Chalcedon, the *sermones* should not be read in hindsight. The variations in the use of the vocabulary of the *formae* across the Christmas *sermones* reveal an ongoing struggle to explain how the *formae* are interrelated in the incarnation. At times, Augustine simply states that Christ did not lose his divinity in becoming incarnate[16] and offers no further explanation. At other times, he uses analogies, such as comparing the incarnation to human voice[17] or to a second birth.[18] At still other times, he leaves the problem of the *formae* aside

10 Cf. s. 184, s. 185, s. 190, s. 191.

11 Cf. s. 187 and s. 188.

12 Cf. s. 186, s. 187, s. 192, and s. 196.

13 By 'pro-Nicene' I refer to accounts of the Trinity and theology at large in the 4th century in line with the tenets of the Council of Nicaea. This approach in Patristics was advanced in the work of Lewis Ayres and R. Barnes.

14 Cf. s. 187.

15 Cf. s. 186.

16 Cf. s. 186.3.

17 Cf. s. 187.4.

18 Cf. s. 196.1.

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and stresses only the pedagogical dimension of the incarnation: being simultaneously 'emptying' of divinity and 'taking on' of humanity, the incarnation teaches that true freedom comes from humility, the consequence of which is exaltation.[19]

These variations on Augustine's interpretation of Phil 2:6–7 should be considered as emphases, rather than divergences, on characteristic thematic aspects of the Christmas *sermones*. Some variations indicate a shift in the polemical context or rhetorical aims. They may be articulated in terms of the problem of the mutual relation of the *formae*, which is not dictated by the text of Phil 2:6–7, but rather by factors external to the pericope. The variations reveal Augustine's ongoing commitment to a scripturally grounded pro-Nicene Christology.

Out of the 15 Christmas *sermones*, 12 can be dated to the 25th of December with some certainty,[20] while the dating of the other three remains inconclusive.[21] The reference to Phil 2:6–7 appears in these sermons not earlier than in 396, at least once before 411–412,[22] possibly at least once in the period of 411–412 (or after 400),[23] and at least once after 411–412.[24] The only reliable dates for detecting developments in the use of Phil 2:6–7 are *sermo* 187, written before 411–412, and *sermo* 192, written after 411–412. However, those two sermons exhibit more convergence than divergence in terms of content and their only significant variation concerns the *orchestration scriptuaire*, which can be taken as an indication of later dating and not necessarily of a shift in interpretation. Indeed, Augustine employs *orchestration scriptuaire* before and after 411–412 to support core pro-Nicaea Christological premises in his exegesis of Phil 2:6–7 throughout the Christmas *sermones*. The content of the interpretation remains the same: Christ is divine and the incarnation does not affect his divinity. Hence, the development in the Christmas *sermones* consists at best of applying scriptural variations to support a constant doctrine of the incarnation.

The thematic context of incarnation, which provides determining framework for Augustine's use of Phil 2:6–7 in the Christmas *sermones*, is dictated by the feast itself, rather than by the text. The other external instance is the pro-Nicaea Christology, which Augustine strives to undergird with support of Phil 2:6–7, together with a number of other scriptural passages. These concerns

19 Cf. s. 192.
20 Cf. ss. 184–188, ss. 190–192, ss. 194–196, and s. 370.
21 Cf. s. 150, s. 217, and s. 369.
22 Cf. s. 187.
23 Cf. s. 186.
24 Cf. s. 192.

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explain his special focus on the problem of relation between the *forma dei*, which Christ had from all eternity, and the *forma serui*, which he took up in time. Augustine employs the *forma dei* and the *forma serui* to speak of the incarnation within the context of the birth of Christ.

To that extent, the function of Phil 2:6–7 in the Christmas *sermones* is context-sensitive. However, the content of the *formae* and how they are related is dictated by extra-contextual considerations, specifically, by a (prior?) commitment to a pro-Nicaea Christology. Hence we can say that Augustine's interpretation of Phil 2:6–7 in the Christmas *sermones* is shaped within the interaction of the polemical context and the liturgical contexts. In the Christmas *sermones*, intertextuality is therefore context-dependent.

Inversely, by incorporating the motive of *formae* within the reading strategy of the Christmas *sermons*, Augustine was able to offer a framework to speak of the birth of Christ as the incarnation of the Word. We will see that the *formae* framework is the weaving thread which for Augustine unifies the interpretative narrative of the life of Christ throughout the Liturgical Feasts.

3 Lent

The Lent *sermones* cover a lengthy liturgical period.[25] They also generally treat a number of themes ranging from fraternal unity[26] to the soteriological implications of the passion of Christ.[27] That being said, there are identifiable recurring themes on which Augustine preached during the Lenten season: humility[28] and penance and forgiveness (fasting, almsgiving, and prayer following Matt 1:6–8).[29] In the period of Lent, the catechumens were getting prepared to receive baptism at Easter by being instructed in faith and by aesthetic practices such as fasting. The practice of humility, penance, and fasting was modelled after the example of Christ, who fasted for 40 days (Matt 4:1–11) after being baptised by John the Baptist (Matt 3:13–17).[30] After the weeks of fasting and before receiving baptism, the catechumens were given the 'symbol of faith' (*traditio symboli*), which contained the doctrines necessary for obtaining salvation.[31]

25 See, Dupont, *Preacher*, 35.
26 Cf. s. 211.
27 Cf. s. 211/A.
28 Cf. s. 205, s. 207, s. 210, s. 211.
29 Cf. s. 205, s. 206, s. 207, s. 209, s. 210.
30 Cf. s. 210.
31 Cf. s. 212.1.

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The aim and content of the *sermones in traditione symboli* was quite different from those of the *sermones* in early Lent. Accordingly, the Lenten *sermones* can be thematically divided into 'early Lent' *sermones* and the *sermones* in 'two weeks before Easter'. The Augustinian corpus contains 11 extant Lenten *sermones* (possibly an additional 11). Of these, eight were preached in early Lent and three in two weeks before Easter. Augustine employs Phil 2:6–7 a few times in the Lenten *sermones*, once in early Lent[32] and twice in the later period.[33]

In the early Lent *sermones*, Christ is presented as the model of penance to be followed. In s. 207 (c. 400–405), the penance of Christ includes fasting, prayer, and alms-giving (Matt 6:1–8). Augustine notes that penance, as the name suggests, is an act of mercy. Hence, Lent is a time when the penitent Christ shows mercy to humanity by his own deeds of penance, but mainly through the incarnation, the paradigmatic expression of *misericordia super miseros*: the highest form of mercy is the act of Christ being 'clothed' with an earthly body. The 'clothing' is the *forma serui* of Phil 2:7. Christ thirsts, hungers, and becomes weak and wounded until death in his *forma serui*. Therefore, fasting is humility after the example of Christ, who was humble in his obedience to the Father (Phil 2:8). In short, the 'cloth' of flesh (*forma serui*), which Christ takes on in his incarnation, is the means by which he teaches mercy and humility (Phil 2:6–7) by word and deed (Matt 6:1–8).

Generally, the (three) *sermones* 'two weeks before Easter' are concerned with teaching the kind of Christian belief, which is conductive to salvation, i.e. the articles of faith embraced in the Council of Nicaea. After all, it is not possible to call upon the Lord without first believing (cf. Rom 10:13–15).[34] The key Christological statement discussed throughout the *sermones in traditione symboli* is the confession "I believe in Jesus Christ his only Son and Lord." Augustine understands Christ as the Son and Lord in line with pro-Nicaea Christology in s. 213 and s. 214 (and indirectly in s. 212). Indeed, the human Christ is not always recognised as divine (cf. 1 Cor 2:8).[35] In Augustine's reading, Phil 2:6 (in combination with John 1:1; Gen 1:1; 2 Cor 6:2 and Luke 1:34–35) supports the divinity of Christ, whereas Phil 2:7 (as also John 14:28) is the basis for emphasising the humanity (soul and flesh)[36] of Christ. Thus, in s. 213 and s. 214 Augustine employs Phil 2:6–7 to explain the kind of belief in Christ which can procure salvation. Specifically, Christ is divine because he is equal to the Father.

32 Cf. s. 207.
33 Cf. s. 213 and s. 214.
34 Cf. s. 213.
35 Cf. s. 213.
36 Cf. s. 214.

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In all the Lenten *sermones* where Phil 2:6–7 is employed, the *forma serui* signifies the humanity (body and soul), which Christ takes together with the *forma dei* in his incarnation, and so both *formae* are related and, indeed, united. Their content is uniform, but they differ in function. The *forma serui* may express mercy and moral example of Christ,[37] at other times it has salvific function,[38] and it can also function as an assurance that Christ experienced suffering.[39] Likewise, the *forma dei* is interpreted in the sense of various functions. Generally, it expresses the divinity of Christ,[40] but it is also understood as the basis for the humility of Christ,[41] as the locus of belief in Christ as God,[42] of judgement and of the vision of God.[43] These various functions concur in a unified (pro-Nicene) Christological content.

Generally, the *forma serui* is understood in the Lenten *sermones* as both concealing and revealing the *forma dei* to the sight of faith and to the physical eye.[44] Augustine uses this dialectic of visibility and invisibility of the *forma dei* and *forma serui* for the discussion of mercy and humility in the 'early Lent' *sermones*, as well as for presentation of the right belief in the *sermones in traditione symboli.*

Explaining the specific relations between the *formae* in terms of the pro-Nicene Christology, i.e. their interaction, and especially their unity, is the crucial problem that Augustine copes with in his Lenten *sermones.* That the 'forms' reveal and conceal Christ as God and man can be understood quite easily, but the manner how they are united needs explanation. According to the requirements of the pro-Nicene Christology, Augustine strives to advance a doctrine, in which the divinity and humanity of Christ is related as united yet different, visible yet invisible, human yet divine. He does not seem to be interested in this problem in the 'early Lenten' *sermones*, but the accent appears in the dogmatic context of *sermones in traditione symboli*, where Christology bears on salvation.[45]

We have already noted that in s. 213(.5) the flesh (a loose expression for 'human nature') or *forma serui* is the basis for ensuring the capacity of Christ to suffer, in penance and in the passion. To explain, why it is the humanity

37 Cf. s. 207 and s. 214.
38 Cf. s. 214 and s. 213.
39 Cf. s. 207.
40 Cf. s. 214 and s. 217.
41 Cf. s. 213.
42 Cf. s. 213 and s. 214.
43 Cf. s. 214.
44 Cf. s. 207, s. 213, and s. 214.
45 Cf. s. 213 and s. 214.

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and not the divinity of Christ that suffers, and yet the whole Christ suffers, Augustine describes the incarnation by the analogy of 'putting on' a tunic on the human skin. The human skin represents the divinity of Christ and the tunic his humanity. While the harm done to the tunic does not affect the skin, aggression against the tunic is in a sense aggression against the owner of the tunic (i.e. the one wearing it on their skin). Likewise, Christ suffers in his humanity, and in an analogous sense his divinity is 'injured'. However, while the humanity truly suffers, the divinity remains unaffected.

In spite of its rhetorical aim, the tunic analogy can easily be taken for Nestorianism (the two natures are separated) or Monophysitism (the humanity is buried). Interestingly, Augustine drops the tunic analogy in s. 214. Instead, s. 214 displays a robust, scripturally based, and theologically articulate Christology, which leaves little room for misinterpretation. This is part of the reason why commentators suggest that s. 213 was written as early as 391 CE, just after Augustine's ordination, whereas s. 214 was probably written two decades later, around 410 CE. The contentious assumption underlying this claim is that a more sophisticated theological articulation is indicative of a later date.

If this assumption is right, s. 214 marks an important development from s. 213 in the interpretation of Phil 2:6–7 within the context of the Lenten *sermones*. The tunic analogy as such should not put into question Augustine's commitment to pro-Nicene Christology. Rather, it may serve as an ample illustration of his ongoing difficulty and struggle to explain, how the *formae* are ontologically related according to the requirements of the pro-Nicene Christology. Alternatively, if the dating is wrong, the variations still point to the importance of Phil 2:6–7 for the deliberation about the incarnation in the context of 4th-century post-Nicene Christological polemics on liturgical occasions.

To summarise, in the Lenten *sermones* Augustine employs Phil 2:6–7 in two main thematic contexts, namely, in preaching penance (as mercy) in the *sermones* of 'early Lent' and in instructing the neocatechumens in the belief in Christ conducive to salvation, mainly in the *sermones in traditione symboli* some weeks before Easter. In both cases, the theme is dictated by the liturgical context. Throughout the Lent *sermones*, the *forma serui* corresponds to the humanity of Christ and the *forma dei* to his divinity, but the functions of the *formae* vary. Throughout these variations, the functions of the two intertwine in the dialectic of revealing and concealing: the *forma serui* reveals and conceals the *forma dei*. The effort to show this relation between the *formae* indicates that Augustine postulates the unity of the formae on the basis of his (prior?) commitment to the pro-Nicene Christology. If the assumed relative dating of the Lent *sermones in traditione symboli* is correct, we may trace in them Augustine's struggle to improve his explanation of how the *forma serui*

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and the *forma dei* are united. The importance of such explanation is obvious: understanding who Christ is was crucial for appropriation of his mercy, and so for gaining salvation. In short, the shift in the function of Phil 2:6–7 within the two thematic groups of the Lenten sermons reveals that the interpretation of Phil 2:7 is context-dependent. However, the continuity of content within the Lenten *sermones* suggests that it is determined by extra-contextual concerns, such as Christological polemics. Whereas in the Christmas sermons, the *formae* mainly function to undergird the divinity of Christ, in the Lenten ones they are used to make sense of Christ as a suffering servant, and therefore an *exemplum* for humans to follow, while fully preserving his divinity.

4 Easter

Lent concludes with the remembrance of the passion and death of Christ and culminates with the celebration of his resurrection, which marks the beginning of Eastertide. Unsurprisingly, in the sermons for the period of Easter Augustine employs Phil 2:6–7 within the thematic context of the resurrection of Christ. According to the Scripture, the resurrected Christ made a number of appearances before ascending to heaven (cf. Acts 1:1–11; Acts 2:32–33; Col 3:1). This period is mirrored in Eastertide, which lasts up to six weeks, covering Easter Vigil (the night leading to Sunday) and Easter Day itself (the beginning of Easter Week) and concluding with the Feast of Ascension.

There are approximately 85 extant Eastertide *sermones* of Augustin.[46] Of these, 28 were preached at Easter, be it during the Easter Vigil or on the Easter Day itself. The remaining 57 *sermones* were preached during Easter Week, i.e. the octave after Easter Day. Augustine employs Phil 2:6–7 in only four Eastertide *sermones*: twice during the Easter Vigil[47] and twice in the Easter Week.[48] Within the general Eastertide theme of resurrection, the Easter Day *sermones* emphasise the victory of Christ over death, whereas the Easter Week *sermones* do not have such a clearly defined and unified thematic component. Rather, they exhibit a number of thematic variations, mainly determined by the main scriptural reading and/or by the liturgical feast falling on the day when a given *sermo* was preached. Both sermons during Easter Week employ Phil 2:6–7 within the exposition of the main reading John 20:1–18, the story about the disciples coming to the empty tomb of Christ. Hence,

46 See Dupont, *Preacher*, 29–86.

47 Cf. s. 223F and 223H.

48 Cf. s. 244 and s. 246.

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within the general Eastertide theme of resurrection, Phil 2:6–7 is employed in two specific thematic contexts corresponding to the Easter Vigil and Easter Week: vanquishing of death by Christ[49] and witnessing of the empty tomb by the disciples.[50]

In the Easter Vigil *sermones*, Phil 2:6–7 is used to speak about humility within redemption. The death of Christ and his victory over death are situated within the larger scheme of salvation, indicating the redemption of humanity. To convey the drama of salvation, Augustine employs throughout the Easter Vigil *sermones* the imagery of light and darkness. The grace of Christ is represented by the light which dispels the darkness of sin. Just as light and darkness were separated by God's Word in the beginning (the first creation), so (in the re-creation) does the light of Christ's grace vanquish the darkness of sin. The theme of faith in the resurrection of Christ is also prominent in the Easter Vigil *sermones*,[51] as it helps to reinforce the belief in the salutary work of Christ. Augustine emphasises that Christ accomplished his work through humility. Indeed, throughout the Augustinian *oeuvre* the pride and fall of Adam are often contrasted to the humility of the spotless and innocent Christ, who willingly and obediently died on the cross. Unlike the theme of faith, humility is discussed in three *sermones* only,[52] and in all these cases, the humility of Christ is stressed on the basis of Phil 2:6–7.

To illustrate the relationship between humility and salvation, Augustine employs typology. In *sermo* 223F, Christ is identified as the lion of the tribe of Judah (cf. Gen 49:9), whose sleep is taken as an allusion to Christ's death. This identification is contrasted to the lion who devours (cf. 1 Pet 5:8), an allusion to the devil. Christ died (cf. John 19:30), albeit not out of sinfulness but out of mercy, his weakness was his strength (cf. 1 Cor 1:27). Christ arose from the dead, so every knee must bend (cf. Phil 2:9–10). He was raised by the invisible God, who he also is, as the Word – Christ is divine and equal with the Father. According to *sermo* 223H, the Easter Vigil celebrates the humility of the Lord, who became man and died on the cross (Phil 2:8). Mountains are a recurring theme, representing the Apostles (cf. Ps 36:6; Ps 76:4; Isa 2:2 and Matt 17:20). Typological reading enables Augustine to illustrate the function of Christ's humility within the history of salvation, culminating in the humility of the incarnation in Phil 2:6–7.

49 Cf. s. 223F and 223H.

50 Cf. s. 244 and s. 246.

51 Cf. s. 220, s. 221, s. 222, and s. 223.

52 Cf. s. 223F, s. 223H, and s. 223I.

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Out of approximately 16 extant Easter Vigil *sermones*,[53] only in two Augustine specifically refers to Phil 2:6, emphasising thereby the humility of Christ. Both these *sermones* were preached *c.* 400. We may note that in the Augustinian *oeuvre*, as in Patristic exegesis at large, Phil 2:6–7 is most often used to illustrate the humility of Christ. Hence, while it is not possible to conclude that humility is context-dependent in this exegesis, it can be concluded that *c.* 400, in the context of the Easter Vigil *sermones*, Augustine is more interested in illustrating humility than in the actual meaning of the *formae* in Phil 2:6–7 and their relationship. In a unique combination, he emphasises the humility of Christ as his means for vanquishing death. Such a reading is largely dictated by the liturgical occasion and is only incidentally illustrated by a typological exegesis of Phil 2:6–7.

There are approximately 40 extant Easter Week *sermones*. In general, Augustine treats in them the theme of *fides* with respect to the resurrection. The specific themes treated in the individual *sermones* are guided by the readings of the day.[54] The passage Phil 2:6–7 is employed in the context of Philip's wish to see the Father (the main reading John 14:8),[55] and in the context of the reinstatement of Peter (John 20:1–18).[56] It appears in Augustine's discussions of faith.

In the both mentioned Easter Week *sermones*, the *forma dei* and *forma serui* function to illustrate the relationship between the resurrected Christ, his body, its being seen by the disciples, and their response. In *sermo* 244 (related to John 20:1–18), the belief is presented as gradual and transformed. The faith in Christ prior to his death is different from the one after the resurrection. Augustine notes that after Mary reports what she saw at the tomb, Peter and John believe not in the resurrection, but in the absence of the body of

53 Cf. s. 219–223, and s. 223A–223K.

54 The most frequently used leading scriptural passages for the extant *sermones* for the Easter Octave are: John 20:11–18 (Christ's appearance to Mary Magdalene), John 21:1–14 (the reinstatement of Peter), Gen 1:6–31 (the creation narrative), Mark 16:1–6 and Luke 24:13–35 (coming to the empty tomb), Luke 24:36–49 (the appearance of Christ amidst the disciples), Mark 16:1–16 (Christ sends forth the Apostles to preach the Gospel), Luke 20:1–18 (the Parable of the Tenants and the authority of Jesus challenged), Luke 24:50–53 (the Ascension), Luke 20:19–23 (the Authority of Christ tested), John 20:19–23 (Christ appears to the disciples), John 21:15–25 (Peter's love for Christ, many things Christ did), Ps 115:11; Ps 117:24; Acts 4:19–20 and John 14:8.

55 Cf. s. 229.

56 Cf. s. 244.

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Christ. Augustine stresses here the link between sight/touch and belief. The disciples did not believe in the risen Christ (cf. John 20:8–9). The (wrong) faith of Peter the rock, the foundation stone of the Church (cf. Matt 16:16–18), was buried under the cross. In fact, Christ is the rock, not Peter, and this rock rose to make the faith of Peter solid. The belief in Christ's divinity is enhanced by the resurrection, when it is possible to touch Christ (John 20:16–17). Touch is a sign of faith – such as touching Christ's garments (Mark 5:28) or even Christ himself (Luke 8:45–46). What is touched, however, is the earthly Christ, not the Word (John 1:1.3–4). Christ remains divine even if he dies, is buried, and rises (Phil 2:7.6), but the divinity and ascension of Christ are beyond sight and by touching the earthly Christ, one may lose sight of the heavenly Christ. Nevertheless, Christ is equal (Phil 2:6), begotten from eternity, which is difficult to explain (Isa 53:8). The resurrection was only believed after Christ's ascension, when it was seen. It was then that the Apostles believed in the divinity of Christ. In *s.* 244 the emphasis of divinity lies on 'ascending' Christ.

Grace has important role in both sermons. In *sermo* 229, grace is required for the belief, because Christ is a stumbling block. In *sermo* 224, it is by grace that the faith prior to Christ's death is transformed to the faith after his resurrection. Both sermons chart the passage from the belief in the humanity of Christ to the belief in his divinity. Similarly, *sermo* 246 underscores the divinity of Christ. In all cases, Augustine's concern is to explain, how the *forma serui* leads to the belief in the divinity of Christ, viz. the *forma dei*.

To conclude, the *forma dei* and *forma serui* enable Augustine to speak of the epistemology of the sight of the risen Christ, while incorporating other important themes such as *voluntas* and *gratia*. The text Phil 2:6–7 serves as a pedagogical and conceptual tool, employment of which is conditioned by its liturgical context. We have seen that Augustine employs Phil 2:6–9 within two context-dependent themes. In the Easter Vigil *sermones*, the *forma serui* functions to present the humility of Christ, i.e. his humanity. In the Easter Week *sermones*, the dialectic of *forma dei* and *forma serui* enable Augustine to develop an intricate yet underdeveloped epistemology of faith, bringing together elements of revelation and concealment, will and grace – that all under the umbrella of the theme of Christ's resurrection.

These two themes, humility and revelation, are context-dependent in that they are explicitly dictated by the liturgical occasion and, less explicitly, by underlying polemics surrounding Christology. As it was the case in the Christmas and Lenten *sermones*, the *formae* motif is central in the Easter *sermones*, where Augustine explores a specific passage of the life of Christ, while carefully juggling contrasting aspects of its mystery.

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5 Ascension

The Easter period leads to the Feast of the Ascension,[57] which commemorates the day when "Christ goes to the Father".[58] In the 12 extant Ascension *sermones*, Augustine often reflects on the body of Christ as the object of faith (*fides*): faith in Christ depends on the continuity of his body before death, in the passion, after the resurrection, and in the ascension. Augustine conditions *fides* on the 'continuous' body of Christ in order to explain, how sight (*visio*) turns into faith (*fides*). In other words, in the Ascension *sermones*, the physical (human) departure of Christ to the Father is a requirement for *fides* in the spiritual (divine) aspect of Christ. In his exegesis of Phil 2:6–7 in four Ascension *sermones*,[59] Augustine employs the language of *forma serui* and *forma dei* to explain, in various and complex ways, how the flesh of Christ (*caro Christi*) is the basis for attaining *fides* and ultimately spiritual sight. A development is noticeable from *sermo* 264 to *sermo* 265F in Augustine's understanding of the relation between *fides* and *visio* in the use and function of *formae* language within the context of the ascension.

In *sermo* 264, faith is based not on sight but on its absence. Augustine notes that at first, the disciples thought of Jesus only as a man, and so they wanted him to remain in the flesh before their eyes. That is because belief, which is possible only after the ascension of Jesus, requires grace (a "lift"). The time between the resurrection and the ascension (40 days) therefore functions to reinforce the disciples' faith.[60] However, it was important to withdraw the 'fleshly' Jesus from the sight of the disciples for them to think of Jesus as God.[61] Jesus goes to the Father, with whom he is equal (cf. John 14:28 and 10:30), and Christ is God because the *forma dei* is equal to God. The disciples did not rejoice in the ascension because they wanted to have the fleshly man, not God. They did not understand that the absence of the flesh enabled them to see Jesus as God. Furthermore, to think of Christ not as a man but as God, in his absence, the disciples needed to imitate Christ, who humbled himself (cf. Phil 2:6–8). In short, in *sermo* 264 the fleshly absence signifies a spiritual presence: the faith

57 See Dupont, *Preacher*, 65–86.

58 Cf. s. 264 and s. 265.

59 Cf. s. 264, s. 265, s. 265A, and s. 265F.

60 Cf. s. 244.

61 The anti-Arian concern is to show that Christ is in fact God, in spite of a number of texts seemingly suggesting that Christ is inferior to the Father, such as John 14:28. In s. 244, as elsewhere, Augustine uses Phil 2:6–7 to harmonise John 14:28 with other pro-Nicene texts such as John 10:30 and John 14:9.

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in the divinity of Christ is not in the vision, be it of the resurrection or of the ascension, but in the lack thereof.

In *sermo* 265A, belief is no longer a means to seeing God, but becomes itself a kind of sight of God. Like in *sermo* 264, the main polemical concern is to show, along the lines of the pro-Nicene strand of Christology, that Jesus is divine, like the Father. Again, like in *sermo* 264, Jesus must be absent, so that his divinity may be 'seen', there is no *uisio dei* without absence. Flesh should not be used when thinking of God. In the ascension, Christ in his bodily form leaves the disciples and they are saddened, but Christ asks them to rejoice, because he is going to the Father, who is greater (cf. John 16:6; 14:28). Christ is visible in his *forma serui* and in the *forma serui*, the Father is greater than Christ. Removing the *forma serui* from sight is a condition for the spiritual sight of Christ. The *forma dei*/*forma serui* distinction helps to discern between apparently contradictory biblical passages.[62] Hence, in *sermo* 265A, Phil 2:6–7 serves largely as a hermeneutic tool for reading the Scripture with a pro-Nicene bent against the Arians.

In *sermo* 265E, the form as the object and means of belief is not the main focus, as it was the case in *sermones* 264 and 265A. The form of a servant (humanity of Christ) is necessary, irrespective of belief in the divinity of Christ (as was the case earlier) for redemption (paying a debt). In fact, it was crucial that the disciples do not believe, for redemption to take place. Otherwise, Christ would not have been crucified (cf. 1 Cor 2:8). The debt was paid through his passion, death, and resurrection. Christ is humbled and exalted. By emptying himself, he did not lose his divine nature (cf. John 1:1.3; Phil 2:6), to 'empty' means to 'take up', not to lose. And he was exalted because of his humility (cf. Ps 97:9 and Phil 2:7–11).

In *sermo* 265F, the *forma serui* is presented as enabling adoption, as adoption requires redemption. To 'empty' is to 'take' the *forma serui* (cf. Phil 2:6–7 and Mark 10:45). Against the Arians, Augustine still wants to maintain that taking the *forma serui*, together with the expression "our God" in John 20:17, does not imply that Jesus is not divine.[63] To this end, Augustine explains what paternity is, which in turn enables him to further illustrate the nature of adoption in the ascension.[64] God is Father to his only son Christ in a different way to what is meant by saying that God is Father to us. God is the God of Christ, who was sinless, and he is our God, because he saved us from our sins. Christ is in heaven and with us by his divinity and humanity. Therefore, we belong

62 Cf. John 1:14; Matt 28:20; 1 John 5:20; John 10:20; Phil 2:6–7 and Mark 14:34.

63 Cf. s. 246.

64 Cf. s. 246.

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to a 'big family'. Christ ascends to the Father but remains with us. Christ will also descend in the way he ascended, i.e. in the form of a man (Acts 1:11), in the *forma serui*. This descent will bring about judgement, and this time, Christ will be visible to the just and the unjust alike.

To summarise, in the Ascension *sermones* where Augustine employs Phil 2:6–7, there are variations in the treatment of *fides* with regard to *visio dei*. In *sermones* 264–265, the form of a servant conceals/reveals the divinity of Christ. In *sermo* 264, faith is related to sight and is possible only after the resurrection, in *sermo* 265A, faith is normative after the ascension and it requires a 'lift', it is a kind of vision of the divine. In *sermo* 265E, *forma serui* prevents the faith in *forma dei*, thereby underscoring the need for redemption. In *sermo* 265F, *forma serui* enables adoption, but as adoption requires redemption regardless of faith, faith becomes irrelevant in this sermon.

These variations are mainly context-dependent. The shift from concern about faith in the divinity of Christ to concern about adoption through Christ in Augustine's use of Phil 2:6–7 is conditioned by a shift in his polemical aims, from anti-Arian to anti-Pelagian (perhaps even anti-Donatist). On the one hand, the function and content of Phil 2:6–7 are mainly guided by the liturgical Feast of the Ascension, on the other hand, the variations are shaped by the polemical contexts (pro-Nicene and anti-Pelagian), in which the *sermones* were preached, i.e. they are context-dependent. Augustine's reading strategy yet again consists in turning to Phil 2:6–7 to shed light on a mystery, in this case the ascension of Christ. Its intricate and multi-layered analysis hinges on the relationship between the *formae*.

6 Pentecost

Pentecost commemorates the descent of the Spirit after the Ascension of Christ (cf. John 14:26 and Acts 2:1–3). There are ten extant Augustine's Pentecost *sermones*,[65] most of which deal primarily with the unity of the Church.[66] The connection of the theme of unity with that of the Spirit in the Pentecost *sermones* may be explained by the polemic against the Donatists, which was the backdrop of many of these *sermones*[67] and which concerned the extent and nature of the boundaries of the Church.

65 Cf. s. 266–272, s. 272A/B, and s. 272 Ba.

66 See Dupont, *Preacher*, 90–132.

67 Cf. s. 266 and s. 269.

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In his expositions, Augustine employs the Pauline image of the many parts of a body (cf. 1 Cor 12:12; 1 Cor 10:17 and Rom 12:5) and refers to the unity achieved through the speaking in tongues (cf. Acts 2:4).[68] The importance of unity is indicated by the numeral one, which signifies a return to the beginning (*principio*).[69] The descent of the Spirit prefigures the extension of the Church,[70] and ensures its unity[71] in word and deed,[72] God freely gives the gift of the Spirit to the Church.[73] The Spirit is the soul (*anima*) of the Church,[74] whereas Christ is its body (cf. Col 1:18), so the Spirit is to the human soul what Christ is to the body.[75] In addition to the Spirit, Church unity is also ensured by the humility of the faithful[76] and by the humility of Christ,[77] because the Spirit is grace, and grace is reserved for the humble (cf. James 4:6).[78] Finally, the unity of the Church is mediated not only by the acts of Christ, but also by the mystery (*sacramentum*) of his body and blood[79] and by links of peace (cf. Eph 4:2–3).[80]

The unity of the Church (by the Spirit) fulfils the promise of Christ to his disciples to send the Paraclete (cf. John 14:16).[81] However, the promise comes with a condition expressed in John 16:7: for the Spirit to descend, Christ must first ascend.[82] Already the expectation of the Spirit unites believers in a single faith, prayer, and spiritual desire (Acts 1:15).[83] The dialectical (and eschatological?) tension between expectation and fulfilment inscribes the exegesis of John 14:16 in *sermo* 269 into the thematic of Church unity.

By contrast, Augustin's exegesis of John 14:6 in *sermo* 270 is concerned not with the unity of the Church, but with explaining, why the Spirit is sent only after Christ departs. The core of the intricate explanation consists in discerning

68 Cf. s. 270.
69 Cf. s. 272/B augm.
70 Cf. s. 267 and s. 271.
71 Cf. s. 268 and s. 269.
72 Cf. s. 269.
73 Cf. s. 266.
74 Cf. s. 267.
75 Cf. s. 267.
76 Cf. s. 272/A.
77 Cf. s. 271.
78 Cf. s. 270.
79 Cf. s. 272.
80 Cf. s. 270.
81 Cf. s. 273B and s. 272/B augm.
82 Cf. s. 276.
83 Cf. s. 267.

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the modes of speech Christ adopts: Christ may speak as God or as man. In line with other Patristic authors, the basis for this distinction is Phil 2:6–7, which Augustine often uses in anti-Arian polemics. We could follow a similar reasoning in *sermones* for Ascension. The ground for the condition is not that God is keeping something what he then gives as the Spirit, nor that Christ has to bring something back, so that the Holy Spirit can descend with it. Rather, because Christ emptied himself in the *forma serui*, the affection of the disciples is confined not to the spiritual, but to the fleshly Christ. Therefore, the absence of flesh was necessary (in the resurrection and ascension) before the promise to send the Paracelete could be fulfilled at Pentecost. Indeed, it is only when the Spirit descends, that Christ is glorified in the *forma dei*. Augustine wants to make clear that the work of the Spirit and Christ cannot be separated. Jesus wanted the disciples to have divine affection and the shift from the flesh to the spirit (presumably in the affection for Christ) could only be achieved by the gift (grace?) of the Holy Spirit. To illustrate this, Augustine turns to the character of Peter. Peter was afraid that Christ would die, as it came to surface in the passion story, because all his affections were attracted to the flesh of Christ; hence the juxtaposition of the confession of Peter (cf. Matt 16:16) and his rebuke by Christ (cf. Matt 16:22). Disappearing of the human form (*forma serui*) in the ascension of Jesus so provides a condition and means for believing in the divinity of Christ (*forma dei*) in the descent of the Spirit at Pentecost.[84]

So, Phil 2:6 is a key for Augustine's exegesis of John 14:6 in one of the two cases, when this Johannine text appears in the Pentecost *sermones*. The use of Phil 2:6 depends on the liturgical context, so far as it serves to the exposition of the Pentecost reading, but at the same time, the variations in its use betray the influence of another context, namely the concern of anti-Arian polemic. As such, intertextuality in the *sermones* of the Feast of Pentecost is context-dependent.

Notwithstanding the challenges of diversity, the unity of the *formae* is axiomatic for Augustine. Just as in the incarnation (Christmas) the identity of Christ depends on the unity of the *formae*, so too in the descent of the Spirit (Pentecost), the Church is fundamentally defined in terms of unity in the face of diversity. In Augustine's reading strategy, the tension of difference is the recurring refrain and harmony in unity is the ultimate resolution.

84 Here, the theme of the ascension (absence as presence) is contextualised within the descent of the Paraclete: the belief which was obtained by grace in the Ascension *sermones* now receives the name of the Holy Spirit in the Pentecost *sermones*.

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7 Conclusion

In order to gain better understanding of how intertextuality shapes biblical interpretation, we have made a case study of the use and function of Phil 2:6–7 in Augustine's *sermones* during Liturgical Feasts. Following Kristeva's definition of intertextuality, we have postulated that biblical intertextuality is a product of interactions between contexts – specifically liturgical and polemical. The results of the study substantiate our initial expectation: intertextuality is context-dependent. Hence, when applied to biblical interpretation, intertextuality can be understood as 'intercontextuality'.

In other words, the specific context, in which the biblical text was considered, had marked bearing on the meaning perceived in the text. Of course, these extra-textual factors need not be limited to liturgical feasts and polemics, but may also include sources or a given tradition of interpretation. For instance, there is a non-polemical, non-liturgical, recurring motif in the Augustinian exegesis of Phil 2:6–7 in the *sermones*, namely, the motif of the 'Humble Christ'. The theme of the 'Humble Christ' in the exegesis of Philippians is a common motif in Patristic exegesis and beyond. This would invite further research into extra-textual factors, which may shed still more light on how and to what extent inter(con)textuality shapes biblical interpretation.

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